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OUTER WORLD AND INNER WORLD: SOCIALISATION AND
EMANCIPATION IN THE WORKS OF PETER HANDKE

by Michael Linstead, M.A.

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D at the University of
Warwick, Department of German Studies, September 1985.

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Declaration

Some of the material in this thesis was briefly set out in the following article:

Michael Linstead, 'Die Figur des Kindes in den Büchern von Peter Handke', in Irish Studies in Modern Austrian Literature, edited by G.J.Carr and Eda Sagarra, Dublin 1982, pp.76-93.

Abbreviations

After an initial reference in the notes, the following abbreviations are used in the text of this thesis for reference to primary works by Handke:

IAI	:	<u>Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt</u>
BE	:	<u>'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms'</u>
ZT	:	<u>'Zur Tagung der Gruppe 47 in USA'</u>
SR	:	<u>Das Standrecht</u>
PB	:	<u>Publikumsbeschimpfung</u>
H	:	<u>Der Hausierer</u>
K	:	<u>Kaspar</u>
MV	:	<u>Das Mündel will Vormund sein</u>
RB	:	<u>Der Ritt über den Bodensee</u>
GS	:	<u>Der gewöhnliche Schrecken (Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bauerlichen Kegelbahn)</u>
AT	:	<u>Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter</u>
KB	:	<u>Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied</u>
WU	:	<u>Wunschloses Unglück</u>
U	:	<u>Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus</u>
SWE	:	<u>Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung</u>
LF	:	<u>Die linkshändige Frau</u>
LH	:	<u>Langsame Heimkehr</u>
LSV	:	<u>Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire</u>
KG	:	<u>Kindergeschichte</u>
ÜD	:	<u>Über die Dörfer</u>

Summary

This thesis centres on three groups of texts by Handke, which investigate particular types of mediation between outer and inner world, reality and consciousness. The figure of Kaspar in Kaspar, Josef Bloch in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and Handke's mother in Wunschloses Unglück are all subjected, to a greater or lesser extent, to processes of socialisation, in that pressures from the outer world - language, perception patterns and social roles respectively - prescribe and mould their inner world, robbing each of freedom of action and thought. In each of the groups there are also texts by Handke, which propose and explore ways of overcoming these coercive forces. They all attempt however to transcend their mediating function by concentrating on and investigating the power of a 'magical' or 'mystical' 'directness' of experience and expression, rather than confronting these forces within a social context.

There is therefore a basic antagonism between society and the individual, public and private, running throughout Handke's writing, whereby both are presented as conflicting blocks in a static relationship, rather than in a dialectic of mutual influence. This antagonism stretches also into the area of literary method. As well as models of socialisation, many of Handke's books are also concerned with models of the literary representation of reality. Hence, this thesis devotes its opening chapter to an investigation of Handke's early literary theory and practice. It also attempts to place that theory in a twentieth century context, incorporating consideration of the Russian Formalists, the 'Wiener Gruppe', Alain Robbe-Grillet and Dieter Wellershoff.

The fifth chapter deals with the recently published tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr, where the movement to 'emancipation' as transcendence (rather than confrontation and change) reaches its climax in the homage to the extra-social 'innocence' of the child and the proclamation of the 'Spirit of the New Age'. The final chapter attempts to place Handke within twentieth century Austrian and West German writing.

Introduction

'Outer World' and 'Inner World', reality and consciousness, are terms which are often used in critical discussion of Handke, and indeed he uses them himself, most notably in his collection of poems and texts Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt, and investigation and presentation of connections between the two run right through his work. The individual as a receiver of signs and input from the outer world - whether these be those of language, perception patterns, social role or literature itself - features strongly. The figure of Kaspar in the play of the same name, the former goalkeeper Josef Bloch in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and Handke's own mother in Wunschloses Unglück are all subjected, to a greater or lesser extent, to processes of socialisation, in that pressures from the outer world limit, prescribe and mould the otherwise seemingly endless possibilities of their inner consciousness, turning each into objects to be directed, manipulated, manoeuvred and controlled. In tandem with these works we would maintain that Handke has also written texts, which propose and explore possible ways of avoiding these coercive forces, which attempt to concentrate on and investigate the power of a 'directness' of experience and expression, a liberation from the mediation of systems, which enforce their own coherence, patterns of meaning and interpretation of experience on the individual.

In attempting this in the early work Handke is in line with a general tendency of the Sixties, where

anti-authoritarianism and libertarianism placed emphasis on the 'moment' and on the expansion of consciousness through hallucinatory drugs and the rejection of established moral behaviour, dress etc. Within literature there is a similar tendency to break convention and hierarchy in search of directness, the eternal present. Heinrich Vormweg defines the two motivating energies of the progressive literature of the time as 'Destruktion der Sprache und Konzentration auf die unmittelbare Wahrnehmung'.¹ Within the confines of Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt there are a number of texts, which are clearly illustrative of these energies, and which also attempt to break through and expose the mechanisms of literature, the textual organisation of experience.²

The collection is prefaced by three quotations from Jean Paul, which exemplify the 'direct', unmediated relationship between outer world and inner world Handke is trying to attain. The subject is presented as being trapped between, but also protected by, the two elements: '"...da allemal deine äußere und deine innere Welt sich wie zwei Muschelschalen aneinanderlöteten und dich als ihr Schaltier einfassen..."'.³ A harmonious relationship between the two is postulated, where neither is dominant but both are complementary: '"Keine Antwort, überall Stille im Gasthof - das ganze Zimmer voll Mondschein -..."'. Out of this harmony arises then the longed-for directness and sharpness of experience and perception, as evidenced by the quotation: '"- und in dieser zitternden Minute knisterte der Monatszeiger meiner Uhr..."'.

Handke's actual understanding of the relationship between outer world and inner world can be seen in his own work in the title poem of the volume. This poem attempts to investigate the moments of congruence of outer and inner world by relating emotions and feelings to phenomena and happenings. Thus, shame and embarrassment are associated with travelling in a full lift, indecision with being confronted with a stationary escalator, or carefreeness with seeing a man running through a wood in a track suit. Reality influences and determines states of consciousness in these examples, and similarly our inner state influences and determines the way we see, the meaning we attribute to reality:

Das Erstaunen verwandelt sich in ein weißes Tuch
das nach Feierabend die Süßigkeiten in einer Konditorei
bedeckt (IAI 128)

Handke explains the intention of the poem as attempting to explore 'wo so ein Bewußtseinszustand mit dem äußeren Ort - man könnte sagen auf magische Weise - kongruiert'.⁴ But to explain away this congruence as happening in a 'magical way' is to mystify the concrete forces at work within the dialectical relationship between consciousness and reality. We are embarrassed at travelling in a full lift because such physical closeness to complete strangers is normally taboo in our society; we are indecisive when confronted with a stationary escalator because we sense danger when modern technology does not fulfil its function; we feel carefree when we see a jogger in a wood because it suggests a harmony between a human body and nature which we have increasingly lost with industrial development - these

are possible explanations which, unlike Handke above, base themselves on a mutual relationship of influence between reality and consciousness. Any attempt to change the nature of the mediating forces between inner and outer world must adopt a similar approach by confronting these forces, for they are social forces. Such an attempt cannot merely present any emancipation from them as being attainable via a mystical or 'magical' moment, or at least, if it does, it cannot be said to be laying the base for a true emancipation. But increasingly this is what Handke does.

The social forces of language, perception patterns and roles - presented by Handke in Kaspar, Die Angst des Tor-
manns beim Elfmeter and Wunschloses Unglück respectively - are transcended rather than confronted in the corresponding 'emancipatory' texts - e.g. Der Ritt über den Bodensee, Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied or Die linkshändige Frau. This movement towards transcendence reaches its climax then in a group of works, collectively titled Langsame Heimkehr, where the escape from social forces involves the discovery of Nature, the extra-social 'innocence' of the child and the proclamation of the 'Spirit of the New Age'. Throughout this thesis we will attempt to show that Handke's ahistorical understanding of socialising forces of necessity leads to a literature, which has to deal with emancipation within a private, mythical sphere rather than as a historically sited and specific movement for change.

The proclamation of this 'Spirit of the New Age' involves a coming to terms with the old one, with tradition,

and a critical attitude to tradition and what appears 'natural' is present in almost all of Handke's works. Tradition is not limited to the historical problem of the fascist past, rather it has, for Handke, a much more general meaning of a fixed, established world, into which the individual is fitted. Helmut Heißenbüttel was one of the first critics to realise this in a very early essay:

Man muß (...) einschén, daß es für Handke (...) nicht darauf ankommt, bestimmte Inhalte, Programme, Einzelwerke oder Einzelautoren abzulehnen oder anzuerkennen, sondern darauf, alles zu vermeiden, was nach Vorschrift, Vorbild oder nur historischer Kausalität aussieht. 5

Such tradition is for Handke purely a barrier to the development of the individual subject, which is at the heart of his understanding of the possibilities within literature. This mistrust of tradition extends then to the very act of writing itself. If the individual is socialised in that he adopts pre-existent models of language, perception and behaviour, then literature is also under pressure to reproduce pre-existent models of the representation of reality, rather than illuminating that reality and enlightening the reader. Thus, Handke's early theoretical work on his understanding of realism can be seen to be complementary to his literary practice. This question of the form or method of literature enabling that literature to adopt a critical and investigative stance towards reality, or rather towards Handke's reality, is one which accompanies his writing through the years. With this in mind, this study will begin with an analysis of the crucial early essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' and attempt to apply its conclusions

to some early texts. It will also try to show that even this stance of, as Heißenbüttel calls it, 'affirmative Negation'⁶ has itself a tradition stretching from the Russian Formalists through the 'Wiener Gruppe' to Alain Robbe-Grillet and Dieter Wellershoff.

I. HANDKE AND LITERARY TRADITION

i) The early literary theory

The most important essay for an understanding of Handke's early literary theory is 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' (1967). In this essay Handke attempts to formulate his own expectations of literature both as reader and writer. The piece centres on one sentence: 'Ich erwarte von der Literatur ein Zerschlagen aller endgültig scheinenden Weltbilder'.¹ On one level this sentence marks the general iconoclastic impulse behind much of Handke's writing of the early period, the tendency to undermine, subvert, mistrust or reject anything which smacks of permanence or tradition, any images of the world which seem final. It would also seem to mark, now on a more political level, a yearning for a de-ideologisation of perception. It is surely precisely those cultural products such as literature, film or television, which contribute so much to the establishment of a fixed or dominant way of seeing or reading those self-same cultural products, so that their ideology is then not only transported, but also comes to be denoted as the only 'natural' way of looking at the world. This illusion of naturalness is what Handke expects literature to struggle against through a constant reflection upon how it mediates between reader and writer, that is upon its form, or, as Handke puts it, its method. The way literature provides the reader with information about the world is for Handke just as important as that information itself.

So far this would seem to be an eminently political

undertaking. Although Handke calls himself an inhabitant of an ivory tower, which has connotations of a separateness and an aloofness from everyday reality, it becomes clear that he understands this within the context of a search for a possible future realistic method or methods: 'So will ich mich gern als Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms bezeichnen lassen, weil ich meine, daß ich nach Methoden, nach Modellen für eine Literatur suche, die schon morgen (oder Übermorgen) als realistisch bezeichnet werden wird' (BE 26). Against the background of the increasing politicisation of literature in West Germany in the Sixties, the title of the essay may well be seen as a provocative joke, for there would seem to be little difference between what Handke is demanding here - that literature must constantly work at new methods to deal with and do justice to a changing reality - and what Hans Magnus Enzensberger was to advocate in his 'Gemeinplätze, die Neueste Literatur betreffend' in Kursbuch 15 (1968). On closer inspection the differences present themselves, but not so much as differences of intention, as of the realisation of those intentions. For Enzensberger, culture is the domain of the bourgeoisie, where they will, as far as he can see, remain dominant. Hence, even that literature, which describes itself as critical of the status quo or which demands change will remain harmless because it is merely occupying a position within the bourgeois cultural apparatus. For Enzensberger, the illiteracy ('Analphabetentum') of the vast majority of the West German public is political in nature and therefore demands effective political resistance. Within the realm of culture he can only offer meagre hope in the form of Wallraff's reportages or Meinhof's columns in Konkret. For Handke,

although undoubtedly sharing in broad terms Enzensberger's analysis of the official ideology of deliberate illiteracy and his intention of combatting it, the question of political action, or even that of politics in general, brings many difficulties with it. Handke sees political engagement as necessitating the possession of an image of the world:

Die Grundvoraussetzung für das Engagement ist die Anerkennung eines bestimmten, noch nicht verwirklichten Weltbildes, in dem alles geordnet erscheint, was jetzt, in dem Augenblick, da man sich dieses Bild von der Welt macht, noch in Unordnung oder in 'falscher' Ordnung ist. 2

This is something which Handke, as a citizen, does not possess: 'Ein engagierter Autor kann ich nicht sein, weil ich keine politische Alternative weiß zu dem, was ist, hier und woanders, (höchstens eine anarchistische). Ich weiß nicht, was sein soll' (BE 26). Secondly, it is something which runs contrary to his conception of literature, which is working against such final images of the world, against norms, against the naturalisation of the dominant ways of seeing and interpreting the world. Literature cannot take its material from some pre-determined view of the world, nor can it be the handmaiden of ideology. The only fixed point within writing is for Handke the author, and hence the starting point for his own literature has to be his own experiences and reflections.

This recourse to total subjectivity and to the constant questioning and undermining of the methods literature uses to present the experiences of this subject would seem, at first, to embody strong resistance to the manufacture and establishment of ideology through cultural products. But it begs two questions at least: Are not, firstly,

that subject itself and the experiences it can recall located in a definite historical period with its own attendant ideology, which is present in the way these experiences are perceived even before they are written down? Secondly, has not the reflection on its own methods become during the twentieth century yet another of the final images of the possible functions of literature, so that such reflection merely fulfils a pre-established role, part of whose own ideology is that such reflection actually incorporates opposition to the established ways of seeing? Far from being tradition-less, such literature stretches back at least to the Russian Formalists with their concept of 'defamiliarisation' and also encompasses more recent writers in West Germany, Austria and France. We will look at this tradition more closely, but firstly it is necessary to establish Handke's own position more comprehensively.

In discussing the role of literature in his life Handke differentiates between his positions as receiver and producer of texts. As a reader, literature was able to have an enlightening function upon his otherwise isolated self-consciousness, it was able to make him aware that he was not an unique case, but that he belonged to some kind of community: 'Erst die Literatur erzeugte mein Bewußtsein von diesem Selbstbewußtsein, sie klärte mich auf, indem sie zeigte, daß ich kein Einzelfall war, daß es anderen ähnlich erging' (BE 19). Handke expands on this point a little later in the essay when he names those authors he regards as being instrumental in this capacity: 'Kleist, Flaubert, Dostojewski, Kafka, Faulkner, Robbe-Grillet haben mein Bewußtsein von der Welt geändert' (BE 20).

With the exception of Kleist, these authors are also mentioned by other contemporary writers such as Dieter Wellershoff, Helmut Heißenbüttel and, indeed, Robbe-Grillet himself as being instrumental in their own development, but in the sense of being historical precursors of their own writing in the present, of being the members of a tradition of writers, who, in their own time, sought after new methods of representing their own historical reality.³ Handke's claim, however, that these authors have changed his consciousness of the world presupposes that the world is an unchanging entity outside time or history. It is just feasible that this could be maintained of the twentieth century authors in the list, but surely not of the nineteenth century writers, who were writing of a totally different world from the one Handke inhabits. Robbe-Grillet puts things in their true historical perspective:

Flaubert, Dostoievsky, Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Faulkner, Beckett...Far from making a clean sweep of the past, it is on the names of our predecessors that we find it easiest to agree, and our only ambition is to continue where they left off. Not to do better, which doesn't make sense, but to follow after them, now, in our day. 4

Handke is clearly operating here with a concept of consciousness which is not based upon a relationship between it and the social relations and conditions, in which the conscious being lives. There would seem to be a gap between inner world and outer world. This ahistorical understanding of self-awareness is something which is to run through the majority of Handke's works under discussion, and his equally undifferentiated understanding of socialising forces is to have repercussions for the strategies of emancipation he also explores.

Within the context of his early life however literature provided the means to this liberation and, with self-awareness, came also an awareness of the world around him, but not one which merely registered phenomena more keenly, but rather an awareness, which incorporated the dimension of change, which confronted the seeming finality of the world, its steadfastness. Literature became a mediator between the self and the world, causing the subject's own perception of both to be in a state of permanent flux. It is important to be aware here of the phrase 'the subject's awareness of both', because Handke's understanding of the role of literature at this early stage moves only on this level. There is no expectation or demand on literature within the realm of change of reality. Whereas Brecht, for example, wanted to show that reality was changeable, Handke only emphasises that our perception of reality, our perspective on it and awareness of it, can be changed:

Von ihr (der Literatur) bin ich durchschaut worden,
von ihr habe ich mich ertappt gefühlt, von ihr sind
mir Sachverhalte gezeigt worden, deren ich nicht
bewußt war oder in unbedachter Weise bewußt war.
Die Wirklichkeit der Literatur hat mich aufmerksam
und kritisch für die wirkliche Wirklichkeit gemacht.
Sie hat mich aufgeklärt über mich selber und über
das, was um mich vorging. (BE 19)

This critical attitude to reality, which literature is able to foster in Handke, is an uncommitted critical attitude. It is rather critical per se, and as such it requires an uncommitted literature per se, a literature which refuses to become entrapped by political or extra-literary demands to present reality from a particular point of view or ideology, for such things deal in final images of the world. Not only would, according to Handke,

a committed literature distort and ideologise that world, but it also, because of its mediating role mentioned earlier, would subvert the dimension of change within the reader and petrify his own awareness. Both reality and self would be in danger of becoming finalities. Literary methods, the means of structuring and presenting reality, are also prone to this petrification, and Handke proceeds to discuss these in the next part of his essay.

In this analysis, Handke makes it clear that what concerns him most are the pressures upon literature to present a normative, conformist picture of the world, to become 'einer der Gebrauchsgegenstände dieser Gesellschaft' (BE 21). When this happens, literature is no longer able to fulfil its enlightening potential, but rather it becomes trivial, reproducing reality in its already established meaning. Yet Handke's analysis of the causes of such a situation has certain weaknesses. The main drive in his argumentation centres on what he terms the 'naturalness' of literary methods. Eager to maintain his own open-endedness as a person, - he remarked earlier in the essay that he expected new perspectives from literature 'weil ich mich nicht für schon endgültig halte' (BE 20) - Handke correlates the closedness of much literature, perhaps what most others would term 'Trivialliteratur', with the methods of that literature. When a literary method has become 'natural', when it has become accepted, received and automatic, then it is no longer able, according to Handke, to maintain the critical attitudes of literature: '(Die) Methode wird im Augenblick nicht mehr reflektiert, sie ist schon rezipiert worden.

Unreflektiert verwendet, steht sie der Gesellschaft nicht mehr kritisch gegenüber, sondern ist einer der Gebrauchsgegenstände der Gesellschaft geworden' (BE 21). Taken to its extreme, this means that, for Handke, a method of representation can only be used once before it runs the risk of becoming unrealistic, before the pressures of conformism come to bear:

Eine Möglichkeit besteht für mich jeweils nur einmal. Die Nachahmung dieser Möglichkeit ist dann schon unmöglich. Ein Modell der Darstellung, ein zweites Mal angewendet, ergibt keine Neuigkeit mehr, höchstens eine Variation. Ein Darstellungsmodell, beim ersten Mal auf die Wirklichkeit angewendet, kann realistisch sein, beim zweiten Mal schon ist es eine Manier, ist unreal. (BE 20)

Thus, Handke builds up a relationship between realism and newness of literary method. Realism for Handke would not seem to be dependent upon a certain understanding of reality, upon an ontological concept, but rather upon a specific understanding of the usage of literary methods. Realism is thus a method and not a mode of writing. It is not dependent on the presentation of reality, that is on a distinctive, specific analysis of the forces exerted upon humans within society, but on the presentation of reality, that is on the linguistic, stylistic and literary devices chosen by the author and applied to reality. For Handke the 'reality of literature' - the various methods used for the presentation of reality - takes precedence over this reality and an analysis of it, and presumably such an analysis would only appear to Handke as the fabrication of another final image of the world.

Such stylistic considerations appear to be all-important regardless of the kind of reality the author is attempting to portray. Any judgement of whether a work

of literature is realistic would seem to be solely based upon such subjective criteria as authorial intention or reception by the reader. This presupposes that the reader is open to receive. This is, however, clearly not the case, as we all carry within us expectations of and pre-judgments on what literature is and should be, which are formed and influenced by our various encounters with and exposures to literary products. In the vast majority of cases these are those cultural products, which Handke somewhat scathingly refers to in the essay. He writes:

Es zeigt sich ja überhaupt, daß eine künstlerische Methode durch die wiederholte Anwendung im Lauf der Zeit immer weiter herabkommt und schließlich in der Trivialkunst, im Kunstgewerbe, im Werbe- und Kommunikationswesen völlig automatisiert wird. Viele Serienromane arbeiten heutzutage mir nichts, dir nichts mit der Methode des inneren Monologs, Heerscharen von Autoren arbeiten mit der Methode des Filmschnitts (...). Einiger Methoden der konkreten Poesie hat sich die Werbung bemächtigt. (BE 21)

Apart from the fact that one can quite clearly hear the elitist contempt for such popular forms of writing which have dared to take these methods on board, Handke's conclusion, that when a literary method can be used by writers of trivial literature, then that method has become 'abgebraucht' (BE 21), is misguided. Handke is assigning a permanent value as the result of a particular use. He forgets that literary methods are tools, which acquire a different value with each differing use. As tools, however, they are value-free. An analogy would be to ban knives throughout the country because they can be used as murder weapons, when it is clear that this is only one of their many uses. Tools do not become outmoded purely through repeated use, but because men's needs and experiences change, and in order to satisfy this altered

relationship to the world they need to develop new tools. Literary methods do not produce trivial literature, the writers of trivial literature use literary methods. The repeated use of a literary method does not necessarily mean that that method becomes 'natural' and automatic, for it depends upon how it is used. Neither does the mere use of a new way of representing the world mean a new insight, again it depends on how the method is used. For Handke the hallmark of realism would seem to be just this undifferentiated newness and uniqueness of method, from which equally indistinct insight is expected.

Handke's understanding of realism has a certain clinical coldness about it. At a number of points in the essay he writes of methods being applied ('angewendet') to reality in order, as it were, to find out, as in a blind experiment, if this method is the right one, or rather was, because it can never be used again. Reality would seem to function for Handke as a constant factor full of undiscovered possibilities, which it is literature's task to uncover for the benefit of the reading or writing consciousness. The workings of that reality remain immutable, it is merely the perspective on these which can be changed. For Handke writes throughout the essay of the self being changed through literature, but never of any change in the reality portrayed. This is not to say that we believe that literature can change reality by itself, only people can do that, but when Handke writes of himself being made aware of '(eine) noch nicht bewußte Möglichkeit der Wirklichkeit (...) eine neue Möglichkeit zu sehen, zu sprechen, zu denken, zu existieren' (BE 19-20), then we realise the conservatism underlying his views.

What is being won here is purely subjective. What Handke means is a gained possibility of apprehending or structuring reality for the self, so that this latter can remain open to change, whilst the former remains as a seemingly fixed concept. Handke would perhaps feel his function as a writer legitimised were he only to present oppression in a new way, from a new perspective (as, indeed, he attempts in the text Das Standrecht); others might feel that such an understanding of the writer's possibilities helped to legitimise that oppression.

With such a view of reality as an untapped source of possible new insights, it is hardly surprising that Handke describes his task as searching for new ways of representing that reality in order to see what the results of such an experiment are: 'Es geht mir nicht darum, unmethodisch aus dem Leben zu schöpfen, sondern Methoden zu finden' (BE 22). Methods of writing do not therefore arise for Handke out of a particular need to express experience; methods of writing do not fade or become outmoded because men's experience changes and therefore demands new methods of expression. Rather, methods of writing can exist for Handke before experience, indeed he seems to hope that they will generate it, and they are no longer usable once they have conveyed experience, once they have become part of literary tradition.

Hence, Handke's literary endeavour takes on two forms. Firstly, he searches for new methods of representation - his 'Sprechstücke' or the prose text Das Standrecht could be taken as such attempts -, or, secondly, he tries to make 'unnatural' again those methods which

have become received and automatic. He describes this process with reference to Der Hausierer: 'So wählte ich die Methode, auf unbewußte literarische Schemata aufmerksam zu machen, damit die Schemata wieder unliterarisch und bewußt würden' (BE 28). In this way he hoped to show again 'den wirklichen Schrecken, den wirklichen Schmerz'. Whether Handke succeeded in these early texts will be discussed in the appropriate section later on. There is however another aspect of this early essay, and of others written at roughly the same time, which it is necessary to look at, namely Handke's attitude to language.

Handke's criticism of the works he heard read at the Princeton meeting of the Group 47 in 1966 centred on what he called their 'Beschreibungsimpotenz'.⁵ The authors of these works - Durzak names them as Höllerer and Piwitt,⁶ Handke calls them the authors of the 'Neuer Realismus' and speaks at one point of Herburger - were operating, according to Handke, with a method of description, which merely added to the number of objects described in literature without reflecting on the basic element of description, indeed of all literature, the language used. Handke maintains that for these authors language is like glass or ^alens, a means of seeing through to the objects in the world. This is not enough for Handke: 'Es wird nämlich verkannt, daß die Literatur mit der Sprache gemacht wird, und nicht mit den Dingen, die mit der Sprache beschrieben werden' (ZT 29). This produces an object-orientated realism, and thereby destroys the distance between the 'Wirklichkeit der Literatur' and the 'wirkliche Wirklichkeit': 'So werden die Worte für die Gegen-

stände als die Gegenstände selber genommen. Man denkt über die Gegenstände nach, die man "Wirklichkeit" nennt, aber nicht über die Worte, die doch eigentlich die Wirklichkeit der Literatur sind' (ZT 30). Language becomes reduced to fulfilling a secondary function of merely naming objects and thereby, by extension, fixing them as final images of the world:

Die Sprache wird nur benützt. Sie wird benützt, um zu beschreiben, ohne daß aber in der Sprache selber sich etwas rührt. Die Sprache bleibt tot, ohne Bewegung, dient nur als Namensschild für die Dinge. Die Dinge werden reportiert, nicht bewegt. (ZT 30)

Thus the second aspect of Handke's realism is a constantly vigilant and critical attitude to language. Just as methods of representation can, through appearing 'natural', falsify awareness of reality, so language can present reality in a false light:

Anstatt so zu tun, als könnte man durch die Sprache schauen wie durch eine Fensterscheibe, sollte man die tückische Sprache selber durchschauen und, wenn man sie durchschaut hat, zeigen, wie viele Dinge mit der Sprache gedreht werden können. Diese stilistische Aufgabe wäre durchaus, dadurch, daß sie aufzeigte, auch eine gesellschaftliche. (ZT 30)

But it is not language itself, which is 'crafty' or 'pernicious'. Language itself does not have the ability to distort or falsify experience or phenomena, rather the distortion and manipulation emanate from the user of language. Languages, and above all in view of recent history the German language, are clearly not neutral entities, but those values which certain words have are not the result of an autonomous nature within language, but rather the result of historically and culturally specific usages by human beings. What is more, these values are not constant but change with use and the need

to express human experience. Certainly, an attentive attitude towards language is called for when writing, in order that experience may be expressed and not merely reproduced in a dead manner, but to blame language itself for distortion or falsification is, to use the analogy again, to blame the knife for the murder. But this is exactly what Handke seems to do in his play Kaspar where the distortive possibilities of language are presented as being inherent in language itself. Language is not a 'Realität für sich' (ZT 34) but rather the result of and continuing process of human interaction within specific social relations.

A discussion of Handke's early literary theory is a useful starting point, but it cannot be said to be completed without two other factors being considered: the literary theory in context and the literary theory in practice. The following sections will attempt to address these considerations.

ii) Contexts

The idea of literature defamiliarising or, in Handke's words, making 'unnatural' both our perception of reality and literature's own devices and methods of representation stretches back at least to the Russian Formalists. The Formalists - who were roughly divided into two groups, the Moscow Linguistic Circle (founded 1915) and the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (1916) - saw literature not as a reflection of reality but, following Saussure's view that 'language signifies reality by bestowing a

particular, linguistically structured form of conceptual organization upon it'⁷, literature was conceived of as a 'particular, semiotically organized signification'⁸ of reality. Literature can displace our habitual modes of perceiving the real world and thus make us more open and attentive of it. It can also make us aware of the mechanisms of our perception, just as it makes us aware of its own mechanisms. In his essay 'Art as Technique' Viktor Shklovsky writes: 'The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.'⁹ Literature works at disrupting the easy process of assimilating information about the world into established structures of coherence, it attempts to subvert fixed hierarchies of meaning and value, the 'endgültig scheinende Weltbilder' of Handke's essay. And this is clearly, as it is for Handke, a continual process for the Formalists as such de familiarisation is not intent upon revealing a world 'as it really exists' behind the petrification of our perception: 'The "reality" which literary works are said to defamiliarise is not some presumed raw, conceptually unprocessed, "out-there" reality but "reality" as mediated through the categories of some other form of cognition.'¹⁰ These are merely constructions or significations of reality, offered as reality itself. Thus we deem ourselves able to perceive reality, when all we do is to recognise these constructions. For Shklovsky there exists, as there does for Handke, a distinction between recognising objects and

seeing them:

A phenomenon, perceived many times, and no longer perceivable, or rather, the method of such dim perception, is what I call "recognition" as opposed to "seeing". The aim of imagery, the aim of creating new art is to return the object from "recognition" to "seeing". 11

This transition from recognition to seeing incorporates, as with Handke, the process of revealing those 'naturalised' literary devices, which contribute to the factor of recognition in the first place:

Literature thus effects a two-fold shift of perceptions. For what it makes appear strange is not merely the 'reality' which has been distanced from habitual modes of representation but also those habitual modes of representation themselves. Literature offers not only a new insight into 'reality' but also reveals the formal operations whereby what is commonly taken for reality is constructed. 12

Bennett could well be summarising Handke's intentions as well in this sentence.

There are two more similarities between Handke and the Formalists, which are worth noting before moving on. We have already mentioned how Handke's efforts to denaturalise the dominant ways of seeing and interpreting the world could not allow themselves to be linked to political action. We find a similar situation with the Formalists. Bennett writes of the consciously aesthetic motivation behind their work:

Shklovsky thus viewed the literary device as being 'unmotivated'. The defamiliarisation to which it gives rise, that is, was not thought to be motivated by any consideration beyond that of promoting a renewed and sharpened attentiveness to reality. The category of defamiliarisation was thus invested with a purely aesthetic, and not with an ideological significance. This ran quite contrary to the position of the Futurists who viewed the devices of defamiliarisation as a means for promoting political awareness by undermining ideologically habituated modes of perception. 13

This 'renewed and sharpened attentiveness to reality' as an aesthetic end in itself without any political direction is very similar to Handke's category of 'poetisches Denken' formulated in his acceptance speech of the Büchner prize in 1973.¹⁴ In the speech Handke speaks firstly of the notions of change and being a political person. Using the concrete examples of his own efforts to complain about the construction of his house, he charts the seemingly necessary but ultimately useless pattern of complaining letters and threats. Similarly, sitting in front of the television, he can only shout 'gangster' at Richard Nixon or 'bandits' at the Chilean generals. Political expression seems to be trapped in conventions, which render it harmless. That this could be the result of deliberate political emasculation of the majority by the establishment does not occur to Handke. For him, it is the result of the poverty of expression itself. He condemns such expression as a 'Fiktion von Verständigung' and maintains for good measure that in any case he cannot lead a political existence because he always feels solidarity with the victims, whichever side they are on, and not with the correct or incorrect ideology. Ideology would seem to provide a set of rules and viewpoints, with which reality can be approached, and this is clearly unacceptable to him and incompatible with his role as a writer, for whom there is 'kein genormtes Wahrnehmungsschema, keine vorgegebene Erkenntnis, nichts Selbstverständliches, nichts in den Mund Gelegtes und bereits zu Ende Gedachtes.'¹⁵

In order to maintain this freedom within perception

Handke must turn inwards to 'poetisches Denken', 'das hoffnungsbestimmte poetische Denken, das die Welt immer neu anfangen läßt, wenn ich sie in meiner Verstocktheit schon für versiegelt hielt.'¹⁶ The aim of such poetic thinking is to defamiliarise the world, to deconceptualise its seemingly fixed coherence, which reduces 'die Welt der Erscheinungen (zu einem) Endpunkt.'¹⁷ This is then the basis of Handke's aesthetic programme: 'Ich bin überzeugt von der begriffsaflösenden und damit zukunfts-mächtigen Kraft des poetischen Denkens.'¹⁷ The dimension of change for the future is wrested away from politics and placed within the individual subject's own private consciousness, without social focus, without collective direction.

A second similarity with the Formalists concerns the notion of change within literary forms. Bennett reports that the Formalists attempted 'to explain the dynamics of literary evolution as entirely the result of developmental tendencies at work within literature itself.'¹⁸ Where they did later take account of social and historical considerations within this process, this was as much the result of theoretical as of political necessity:

At root, the Formalists contended that literary forms tended to change and develop simply as a result of the passage of time itself. New literary forms are called into being, they argued, by the need to challenge and disrupt these forms and conventions. 18

Handke's explanation of the same process is similarly undifferentiated: 'Weithin wird mißachtet, daß eine einmal gefundene Methode, Wirklichkeit zu zeigen, buchstäblich "mit der Zeit" ihre Wirkung verliert' (BE 20). This is far too simplistic an explanation of literary

change, and does not begin to consider the factors of speed or direction. Such specificities, which require investigation of the historicity of literature, are beyond both the Formalists and Handke. They resort to the argument that things change with time. But time is never an explanation of change, merely its measurement.

The transition from 'recognition' to 'seeing', the setting free of phenomena, the subversion of fixed hierarchies of coherence, the defamiliarisation of perception and literature - these are all concerns which can be found much more concentratedly in certain strands of post-war literature in West Germany, Austria and France. The literature of the Fifties in German speaking countries was not only that of Böll, Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Grass, Walser or Koeppen. There was a whole strand of experimentalism emerging, which persisted with an examination of language long after 'Kahlschlagliteratur' had faded. Concrete Poetry, the 'Wiener Gruppe', the founding of the magazines akzente (1954) and later manuskripte (1960), the work of Franz Mon and the theory of Heißenbüttel - all attempted to provide that which Heinrich Vormweg missed in the more mainstream products of the time, namely 'eine Literatur der Wahrnehmung, der Artikulation des Realen, der Einsicht in die Konditionen, die den Menschen durch ihre Sprache gesetzt sind.'¹⁹ This concentration on language went hand in hand with a concentration on and a destruction of traditional ideas of literature: 'Mit der experimentellen Literatur kam man zur Sache. Nämlich auf die Sprache selbst und auf Literatur als ein Medium zur Erkundung wie Veränderung des praktischen

Bewußtseins, das in der Sprache konkret ist.'²⁰

The aim of Concrete Poetry was to produce 'ein neues Sprach- und Dichtungsverständnis, das diametral den Intentionen traditioneller Dichtung entgegengesetzt sein soll.'²¹ Such stylistic methods as montage, estrangement, parody and pastiche were used in order to break down traditional artistic expectations in the reader, though these of course relied for their effect on an initial knowledge of these same traditional forms. Language was de-contextualised and used purely as material, which was harnessed to visual, associative or phonetic techniques in an attempt 'mit ästhetischen Mitteln die reine Idee von Sprache zur Anschauung zu bringen (...) Damit sagte sie (die Konkrete Poesie) sich los von dem metaphorischen und individualistischen Umgang mit der Sprache.'²²

The founding of akzente had as a starting point the subversion of hierarchies within literature and a scepticism towards traditional genres: 'Ein Gesichtspunkt für uns war die Enthierarchisierung der Literatur, die Entkrampfung der Denkmalhaftigkeit (...) Die Entkrampfung der Denkmalhaftigkeit kam weiter auch durch Grenzbrüche zwischen den traditionellen Gattungen.'²³ Manfred Mixner characterises the magazine manuskripte as working to break up 'die politisch-ideologische Bestimmtheit der Sprache (...), sie sichtbar zu machen, allerdings ohne dabei zu einer literarischen "Schule" zu werden.'²⁴

Whilst Handke's own description of language as 'tückisch' does not carry the precision or the political emphasis of these intentions, broadly speaking he can be said to

share the same concerns. Certainly, his writing fits snugly into Mixner's description of the general direction of the work published in the magazine:

In den manuskripten wurde ohne besondere nationale Eingrenzung jene Literatur veröffentlicht, die, auf welche Weise auch immer, eine Art anarchische Gegenwehr gegen die Verfügbarmachung des Bewußtseins signalisiert, die - um es mit Worten des Herausgebers Alfred Kolleritsch auszudrücken - gegen die Erstarrung von Bildern sich richtet. 25

Franz Mon emphasises the concentration on methods or 'Schreibhaltungen'²⁶ in this period as a device to escape the authority of content and values. This allergy was a direct result of the experience of fascism, where values were 'nicht winzige, gar überflüssige Partikel (...) sondern die eigentlichen Knüppel, mit denen ge- und erschlagen wurde.'²⁶ Experimental literature is indeed defined by Mon as that literature which expressed 'das Primat der Methode beim Entstehen von Texten gegenüber den inhaltlichen Festlegungen, den ideologischen Wertsetzungen.'²⁶ This very primacy of method in the production of texts is then exactly what, in the following decade, Handke was to proclaim as the hallmark of a realism of the future.

But perhaps the greatest forerunner of Handke in German literature of the Fifties is the 'Wiener Gruppe'. In retrospect Gerhard Rühm attributes much of the energy behind the group's performances to the need to escape from the provincialism of Austrian culture and to make contact with and receive influences from other European countries. The group saw themselves within a tradition of authors - August Stramm, 'Dada', Gertrude Stein, Kurt Schwitters, Hans Arp - who had a basic interest in language and the possibilities of its manipulation in common. The

methods used were typical of experimental literature of the Fifties and were to become commonplace a decade later - montage, repetition, tapes, dialect poems, rearrangements of existent texts, objets trouvés, concrete poetry, the mixing of 'serious' and 'trivial' literature:

wir haben versucht, aus der verwendung von trivial-literatur durch zusammenhangsverfremdungen in der montage neue effekte zu erzielen. die verwendung von trivialelementen wirkte damals, als sie noch nicht durch pop-art mode geworden war, auf das literarisch gebildete publikum provokativ oder mindestens exotisch, auch verschiedene stile konnten so anwendbare ausdrucksmitel werden. 27

gehen, a play written by Rühm in 1962, is prefaced with the text 'die fabel entspricht nicht mehr', in which Rühm rejects the method of the story as it is unable to grasp the many levels of events in the real world:

geschehen begreifen wir so vielschichtig, daß eine fabel, die den komplex eines augenblicks (...) auf nur einen aspekt banalisiert und nur eine richtung (deutung) der zeitlichen aufrollung wahr haben will, unserem weltbild und daher unseren ästhetischen ansprüchen nicht mehr adäquat ist. 28

Handke too rejects the method of the story - only the emphasis is changed as, for him, the story is an unnecessary vehicle for the experiences of the writing consciousness: 'Jede Geschichte lenkt mich von meiner wirklichen Geschichte ab, sie läßt mich durch die Fiktion mich selber vergessen, sie läßt mich meine Situation vergessen, sie macht mich weltvergessen' (BE 23).

Even more specific similarities between works of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and those of Handke can be traced. Friedrich Achleitner's die gute suppe (June 1958) and, within the framework of the 'literarisches cabaret', his friedrich achleitner als biertrinker both show a painfully exact description of some everyday action - a technique

Handke is to employ in his first novel Die Hornissen. Nouns are repeated with the same combination of adjectives, tautologies are introduced - 'die gute suppe ist gut'²⁹ - and these stylistic devices lead to irritation, awakening attention for an event, which would otherwise have passed unnoticed. Konrad Bayer's die begabten zuschauer reverses the roles of audience and actors in the theatre. The audience becomes the play to be watched by the performers. This involvement of the audience - there is surely a clear link here with Handke's Publikumsbeschimpfung - is portrayed by Oswald Wiener as being a basic tenet of the 'literarisches cabaret':

wir werden keine kritik vorzubringen haben, es sei denn die verzweigte kritik an unserem spezifischen publikum, den protest gegen seine passive art, zuschauer zu sein (...) unsere akteure werden keine illusion anderer personen bringen (wie stanislawskis schauspieler), aber sie werden auch andere personen nicht markieren (wie brechts darsteller). sie bleiben sie selbst. 30

This immediately brings to mind the passage from Handke's Publikumsbeschimpfung: 'Wir sind nicht die Bilder von etwas. Wir sind keine Darsteller. Wir stellen nichts dar (...) Wir haben keine Rollen. Wir sind wir.'³¹ Even the idea of offending the audience was used in the performances, as Wiener reports:

als zwei zuschauer in der ersten reihe die nase voll hatten und gingen, wurde von weiter hinten applaudiert. rufe aus dem publikum klangen bestellt, mitteilungen über die aktivitäten der polizei wurden nicht geglaubt. um die uns höchst willkommene verwirrung noch zu steigern, insultierten wir das publikum einzeln und in seiner gesamtheit. manche verliessen die veranstaltung. 32

Bayer and Rühm's operetta der schweissfuss combines in one text perhaps the most examples of methods used later by Handke. In this piece the dramatic time is the actual time,

the dramatic place is the actual place, the actors play characters but are referred to as actors. There are constant asides to the audience breaking any dramatic illusion. Taped applause is also used, anticipating both Publikums-beschimpfung and the use of similar electronic devices in Kaspar. Other examples could be quoted. The main conclusion stands on this evidence, however, that the radicalism attributed to Handke in the mid-Sixties was attributed to him in ignorance of the groundwork accomplished by the 'Wiener Gruppe' up to ten years earlier.

But the most striking forerunner of Handke comes from France in the shape of the nouveau roman and its foremost practitioner and theorist Alain Robbe-Grillet. Handke's demand for constant revision of method before it can become naturalised is a central notion of Robbe-Grillet's essay 'The Use of Theory' (1955; rev. 1965):

A book creates its own rules for itself alone (...). Far from respecting immutable forms, each new book tends to establish its own functional laws at the same time as it brings about their destruction. Once the work is completed, the writer's critical reflection is still useful to him in allowing him to stand at a distance from the work and in immediately supplying him with new material for research and a new beginning. 33

As with Handke, however, Robbe-Grillet can offer no further explanation for the development of new forms of representation other than the passage of time: 'Forms live and die, in all the arts, and in every age they must be continually renewed.'³⁴ The enlightening role of literature, which Handke postulates, is one of the main tenets of the nouveau roman as well. The emphasis is on the objectification of objects, that is, robbing them of their fixed anthropocentric meaning, making them concrete,

definable again and not merely referents of a human emotion or situation, enabling us to 'see' them again instead of only 'recognising' them:

In the original novel the objects and gestures that support the plot disappear completely and leave room only for their meaning: the vacant chair was only an absence or an explanation, the hand placed on the shoulder was only a sign of sympathy, the bars on the window were only the impossibility of getting out (...). But now we see the chair, the movement of the hand, the shape of the bars (...). In the construction of the future novels, gestures and objects will be there, before they are something. 35

This situation has arisen by giving the world a fixed meaning or interpretation, a permanent signification:

We thought we had come to terms with it (the world) by giving it a meaning, and the whole art of the novel, in particular, seemed dedicated to this task. But that was only an illusory simplification, and far from becoming clearer and nearer, all that was happening was that the world was gradually losing all its life in the process. Since its reality consists above all in its presence, what we have to do now, then, is to build a literature which takes this into account. 36

The adoption of fixed meanings, the socialisation of perception, the acceptance of ready-made systems of coherence are rejected:

We no longer believe in fixed and ready-made meanings, which gave man first the old divine order, and then the eighteenth-century rationalist order, but it is in man himself that we place all our hopes: it is the forms he creates that can give meaning to the world. 37

Politics for Robbe-Grillet, as for Handke, belong to this very world he is trying to subvert: 'In our political life we are all the time obliged to assume known meanings: social meanings, historical meanings and moral meanings. Art is more modest - or more ambitious: in art, nothing is known in advance.'³⁸ The subversion of meaning is approached through the method of description, something which Handke too vigorously affirms, for through descrip-

tion there arises a concretisation of objects, a creation of distance. This is the true intent of a recapture of reality. It is not an assimilation, rather exactly the opposite: 'To describe things, in fact, is deliberately to place oneself outside them, facing them. It is not, any longer, to appropriate them to oneself nor to transfer anything to them.'³⁸

It is this new, creative aspect of description, which is emphasised most strongly: 'The thing is that the place and the function of description are now entirely different (...) Formerly they (the descriptions) were trying to reproduce a pre-existent reality: now they claim a creative function.'³⁹ In this sentence from Robbe-Grillet we see crystallised the difference Handke was trying to maintain between his own idea of the function of description and that of the authors he was attacking at Princeton, whom he accused of 'Beschreibungsimpotenz'. The description of a pre-existent reality can do nothing to help us 'see' it, it can only help us 'recognise' it. Thus Robbe-Grillet parries those who claim that the reader is being neglected:

Far from neglecting him, the contemporary author proclaims his absolute need of his co-operation, an active, conscious, creative co-operation. What he is being asked to do is no longer to accept a ready-made, completed world, a solid world, shut in on itself, but on the contrary, to participate in an act of creation, in the invention of the work - and the world - and in this way learn to invent his own life. 40

An irony of this is that Dieter Wellershoff, the prime theorist of the 'Neuer Realismus', which Handke attacked so vehemently at Princeton, is himself recognised as being greatly influenced by Robbe-Grillet and the theory of the nouveau roman. As Handke and Robbe-Grillet look

constantly for new methods of representing reality, so too does Wellershoff. Christa Merkes writes in relation to Wellershoff's essay 'Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit': 'Wellershoff bekennt sich wiederholt zum experimentellen Roman, zur Einmaligkeit einer Form für ein bestimmtes Thema und zur Dauer-Reflexion des Schriftstellers:

"Statt einer normativen Ästhetik gibt es heute die Dauer-reflexion des Schriftstellers über das Schreiben".⁴¹

The theoretical similarities with Handke are striking.

In an interview Wellershoff gave to Merkes these come especially to the fore. Wellershoff defines realism as an 'endless quest', which has as its driving impulse 'Erkenntnis von Realität, und Erkenntnis setzt schon voraus, daß man schon Erkanntes überschreitet'.⁴² Writing is a 'voyage of discovery' for each writer, both within himself as a subject - for 'Schreiben ist eine produktive Auseinandersetzung mit den eigenen Erfahrungen'⁴³ - and within the literary forms at his disposal for the representation of the fruits of the voyage: 'Man muß weiter vordringen in seiner Erforschung des Lebens und man muß für jedes Thema, für jedes Problem auch eine neue Struktur, eine neue Methode finden, um es zu erfassen und zu entwickeln'.⁴⁴

The aim of such writing is to make the world appear strange again:

Man kann es also zum Maß der Poesie erklären, wie fremd, wie neu, wie unbekannt die scheinbar bekannte Welt durch sie erscheint. Der russische Formalist Viktor Sklovskij hat die Kunst als einen Kunstgriff interpretiert, der Fremdheit herstellen soll. Verfremdungen, die die Wahrnehmung erneuern. 45

Wellershoff sites himself within this tradition as well, particularly in his essay 'Wiederherstellung der Fremdheit'.

In this essay Wellershoff writes against a literature, which entraps experience in patterns, which then become institutions, or, as Handke puts it in his own essay, 'naturalised'. Realism is opposed to this: 'Realismus ist für mich die Gegenteil, nämlich der immer neue Versuch, etablierte Begriffe und Ordnungsgestalten aufzulösen, um neue, bisher verbannte Erfahrungen zu ermöglichen, das Gegenteil also einer Wiederholung und Bestätigung des Bekannten.'⁴⁶ Wellershoff places particular emphasis on the use of cinematographic methods in literature as a means of defamiliarising reality and prompting new experience. He does not however seem to share Handke's insistence that each method can only be used once before it becomes mannered, for Wellershoff rather, it depends more upon how each individual device is employed and not purely upon that it is employed. Although he speaks of a 'Herrschaft der Oberbegriffe', Wellershoff is quick to point out that the assumed order in reality is in fact very tenuous: 'Die Technik der Dissoziation, Isolierung und Häufung der Realitätselemente macht bewußt, daß der Ordnungsgrad der Realität immer überschätzt wird.'⁴⁷ This assumption of a certain order behind reality is the result of particular ways of seeing holding sway, ways of seeing the world, which are themselves linked to a specific interest. This is also true of ways of representing the world. Thus Wellershoff links these with the social and historical relations, which help to form this particular interest: 'Sie (die Schreibweise) ist Organ eines Interesses, hinter dem das Ensemble seiner zum Teil unbewußten Motivationen steht. In den individuellen Determinationen stecken natürlich die sozialen.'⁴⁸ Similarly the recourse to subjectivity must

itself be viewed within the context of specific historical and social conditions. This is not to limit its validity, but to point out its own historicity. Wellershoff warns of forgetting this and attempting to give the experiences of the subject some universal validity:

Die komplexen Wirkungszusammenhänge der modernen Gesellschaft haben den Einzelnen längst überwachsen, und auch der Schriftsteller verantwortet nur noch seinen Erfahrungsbereich. Das bedeutet nicht, daß er seine isolierte Subjektivität als epische Quellmasse rhetorisch ausbreiten soll, sondern daß er ihm zugängliche Ausschnitte des Gesamtzusammenhangs erforscht, sich dabei selbst einsetzend als Erfahrungsquelle und -instrument. 49

Handke has moved however more and more over the years towards presenting the individual's experiences as having some universal validity. Particularly in his tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr there is a definite expressed need and search for 'general laws', with which reality can be transcended. This movement towards what Wellershoff calls 'metaphysische Literatur, die immer noch universelle Daseinsmodelle und Sinnbilder, wenn auch vielleicht der Sinnferne schafft',⁵⁰ is at complete variance with the defamiliarisation of reality and its concretisation through rendering it able to be 'seen' again, as opposed to merely 'recognised'. This 'fortschreitende Konkretisierung durch Verzerrung und Auflösung der Schemata',⁵¹ is Wellershoff's understanding of realism, and could also be said to encapsulate Handke's intentions. As we will now see, however, as we look at examples of Handke's work in these early years, good intentions do not always make for good practice.

iii) The early literary practice

In this section we propose to look at three examples of Handke's early work, examples which Handke refers to in 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms'. These are the early prose text Das Standrecht (1964), the most celebrated of his 'Sprechstücke' Publikumsbeschimpfung (1966), and the novel Der Hausierer (1967).

Das Standrecht is the example Handke himself gives in the essay for his intention of finding and using new methods of representing reality in literature in order to break up the final images of the world. What attracted Handke to the original text in a book of criminal law was the way in which the sentences abstracted from a concrete death and presented what is a brutal, inhuman fate for an individual in a distanced, ritualised manner:

Die abstrahierende Form der Darstellung eines ritualisierten Sterbens nahm mich gefangen (...) Die abstrakten Sätze, die von keinem konkreten Sterben erzählten, zeigten mir trotzdem eine neue Möglichkeit, die Phänomene des Sterbens und des Todes zu sehen. Sie änderten meine früheren Denkgewohnheiten über die literarische Darstellung von Sterben und Tod, sie änderten überhaupt meine Denkgewohnheiten über Sterben und Tod. (BE 22-3)

Handke then explains that he wrote a text, the text Das Standrecht, which adopted the method of the law text into literature. It is this process which deserves somewhat more consideration than either Handke or other critics have given it. Nägele and Voris make it too easy for themselves when they latch on to another remark in the essay, where Handke reveals that the text consisted in part of direct quotations from the original law text (BE 23). Handke goes no further than this, although, as we shall see,

these moments are perhaps identifiable, and Nägele and Voris take him at his word and, without any examples, come to the conclusion that 'ein Text (wird) wörtlich zitiert (...), so daß er durch den ungewohnten Kontext, in dem er nun steht, manches offenbart.'⁵² The vagueness of this assertion, with no further mention of what constitutes this unusual context or of what is revealed, is an insufficient judgement on the text. Certainly, the text incorporates much of the clinical legal language, which Handke found in the original, but the main question to be answered is how the text is literature, that is, how is the mode of communication in the text changed from a purely informative and prescriptive one to one of subversion and enlightenment?

On the whole, critics have tended to deal with the first element only. The language of the text corresponds to the disregard for life the text exemplifies and to the need to cover every possible situation within the state of martial law. The language admits of no exception or quarter: 'Wenn in einem Gebiet dieses Landes ein Aufruhr gegen die rechtmäßig bestellte Obrigkeit (...) entsteht, (...) so ist über das Gebiet das Standrecht zu verhängen. (...) Das Standrecht ist durch den Rundfunk und durch öffentliche Blätter zu verkünden.'⁵³ This form of the auxiliary and the infinitive with 'zu' is used throughout the text. It lends it a tone of brutality and inhumanity. The rules as to what is to happen at a military trial are equally impersonal. This is particularly apparent through the juxtaposition of elements in paragraph three: 'Zum Seelsorger für die Verurteilten kann der Geistliche des

Ortes berufen werden; (...) Der Scharfrichter und seine Gehilfen sollen sofort herbeigerufen werden; desgleichen sind die nötigen Gerätschaften bereitzustellen' (SR 88). The difference in the modal verbs used - for the priest it is the modal verb of possibility, for the firing squad it is the modal verb of necessity, especially when coupled with 'sofort' -, the euphemistic use of 'die nötigen Gerätschaften' for rifles, which, in this context, far from drawing attention away from the objects, only serves to focus it on them, are elements which make a mockery of any pretence of justice the text might wish to impart. This type of critical approach has been employed by commentators, notably by Heintz⁵⁴, and it can yield some useful insights, but it is not really getting to grips with Handke's claim that this text is literature. The application of certain literary critical methods to a text does not automatically mean that that text is literature. After all, one could apply these methods to the original law texts and presumably arrive at similar results. Such a method is ignoring the altered context of communication in the text. This alteration is achieved not only by means of the text's intrinsic devices, which on the whole have been pointed out by the critics, but also by the text's relationship to the model, from which it sprang.

The distortion of this model is attempted through a consistent emphasis on the text as law text meant to cover every eventuality in a given reality and to give guidelines as to how to act accordingly. The function of the text as a final organisation and representation of experience, or, in this case, possible future experience, is exaggerated

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to the point of absurdity. The total regulation of life in this particular situation is carried to extremes. Initially the discordant notes are only slightly audible. In paragraph four the regulations concerning the acceptable behaviour of the onlookers are set out: 'Sind die Bewohner des Dorfes wegen ihrer drohenden Haltung von der Teilnahme an der Verhandlung ausgeschlossen, so ist es ihnen verboten, aus den Fenstern oder durch die Ritzen der Scheunen zu schauen' (SR 88-9). The extension of the regulatory, normative function of the text comes to include every possible eventuality until it no longer only proscribes but also prescribes behaviour.

The prescription culminates in paragraph eleven, when the execution actually takes place. The behaviour of the condemned is de- and prescribed down to the last detail:

Die Verurteilten treten einzeln aus der Tür in die Sonne und heben ein wenig die gefesselten Hände; der erste geht langsam über den Hof zur Mauer. Während er sich umdreht, spuckt er aus; daraufhin spucken auch die übrigen Verurteilten aus; der Verurteilte aus dem anderen Land spuckt nicht; er tritt einen Schritt zur Seite und reibt mit den gefesselten Händen die Nase; sein Hemd flattert aus der Hose; er stopft es vorne langsam hinein; hinten flattert es noch immer. Er gähnt. (SR 91-2)

Clearly at this point the model of the text collapses. It steps out of one mode of communication, that of the law text, which it has managed on the whole to maintain, and into that of parody of a law text, thereby defining itself as literature through its changed relationship with the original model. This relationship is then underlined by the fact that parody relies for its effect on knowledge of and tension between the new text and the original. This very reliance on the original is also

thematized in Handke's text. There are two moments in Das Standrecht where the text is seen to be quoting, that is referring outside itself to other texts, even though it would claim in its content to have regulated all possible eventualities. The context of these quotations is important as they form a commentary on the content of the text. In paragraph three we read: 'Es ist ferner dafür zu sorgen, daß eine Person gegenwärtig sei für die Verurteilten, welche die Sprache dieses Landes nicht verstehen' (SR 88). In paragraph twelve Handke writes: 'Ist das Todesurteil an mehreren zu vollstrecken, so ist Vorsorge zu treffen, daß keiner die Hinrichtung des anderen sehen könne' (SR 92). In both cases the subjunctive is used to show that the text is referring to and quoting from another source or document. It is crucial to realise that in both cases the text is dealing with measures to be taken for the well-being of the prisoners - the text speaks of 'sorgen' and 'Vorsorge' - and the implication is clear. Such a text cannot deal with such notions of care directly for itself, but must rely on other sources, such is its inhuman nature. Likewise, a state of martial law is only concerned with such considerations indirectly as they conflict with its own brutal logic.

Das Standrecht serves as a good example of the kind of realism Handke was later to plead for in his essay. With its concentration on and reflection upon methods of representation of reality, with its attempt to break through the finality of a textual organisation of experience, it is supposed to then make the reader more aware and critical towards that experience, in this case towards the total

regulation of dying and death. This may well be the case for some readers - such things are hardly verifiable -, yet because of the lack of definite, specific commitment behind the awareness Handke is trying to achieve, the only final image of the world which is ultimately broken down is that of the textual representation of martial law. Handke's emphasis on parody, and his starting point of the representation of reality rather than the reality itself, means that he finishes by dealing only with the structures of literature, and not with those of reality. Yet martial law could become a reality in the Federal Republic and is provided for in the 'Strafvollzugsrecht'. Handke realised this in his initial confrontation with the original text. In the essay he writes: 'Die Folgerichtigkeit der Sätze, die im Grunde immer Bedingungssätze für eine konkret zu denkende Wirklichkeit waren, das heißt, anzuwenden, wenn der in ihnen angegebene Tatbestand in der Wirklichkeit zutraf, erschien mir äußerst bedrohlich und beklemmend' (BE 22). This political experience of the original text gives way however to an aesthetic exploitation of it. Das Standrecht does not emanate from this experience, it does nothing to explain how or why martial law could be needed, it offers no analysis of that reality, of which martial law is a part or consequence, it offers no support, however small, to those who suffer under martial law. Instead, it remains entrapped within its literary preoccupations, merely providing another way of aesthetically organising a seemingly fixed, brutal reality.

The second example of his own work, which Handke refers

to, are the 'Sprechstücke', his first attempts at theatre. Again, great importance is placed upon the methods used. Handke's attitude to previous theatrical tradition is expressed here in his rejection of both Beckett and Brecht, although his evaluation of both, but in particular of Brecht, is to change within a short time. Theatre had become a relict, which offered only simplifications of reality through its persistence with the method of the story on the stage, and thereby with the maintenance of a traditional imitative relationship between stage and world. However, reality was, according to Handke, misrepresented by the image the stage was able to offer within its limitations. The theatre offered merely an arrangement or re-arrangement within otherwise familiar dramaturgical limits, and, what is more, this arrangement was presented as 'natural'. The stage was taken to signify the world, without any reflection upon this relationship, whether the plays in question were Beckett's pantomimes or Brecht's theatre of disillusion, which for its effect had in turn to operate with further illusions.

Handke's explanation of the establishment of this particular relationship between world and stage as the 'natural' one clearly has repercussions for a second relationship between stage and spectator. The audience's way of seeing is not neutral, but intimately linked to its understanding of the relationship between world and stage, and in spite of a whole number of plays in the twentieth century, which have taken as their subject matter precisely these relationships, and have attempted to problematise and explore them⁵⁵, the overwhelming mode of

perception still in existence is that of the traditional, directly imitative relationship between stage and world. Hence, public reaction to plays such as Edward Bond's Saved or Howard Brenton's The Romans in Britain can still remind us of the events surrounding the premiere of Hauptmann's Vor Sonnenaufgang some ninety years earlier. Handke's Publikumsbeschimpfung and his other 'Sprechstücke' Weissagung, Hilferufe and Selbstbezeichnung attempt to disrupt these traditional relationships. His method is a concentration on words, which, in their contradictions and presentation, allow no chance for a plot or individual story to be constructed. There is no artificial production of a reality outside that of the reality of the performance. No image of the world, whether final or temporary, is presented, merely the words and sentences of that world, though, of course, it may be that these in themselves contain an image of the world they spring from. The overall intention of the plays is the familiar one of undermining and exposing the ways in which our ways of seeing are influenced and directed by the particular aesthetic arrangement of material. In a later essay, 'Die Arbeit des Zuschauers'⁵⁶, Handke develops a number of phrases to describe this situation: 'Mit genormtem Blick schaute man zu'⁵⁷; 'Wieviel Arbeit wurde da aufgewendet, nur um die Blicke der Zuschauer Vertrautes wiedererkennen zu lassen! Als ob die Blicke der Zuschauer Naturgesetzen gehorchten.'⁵⁸; 'Diese Filme sind undialektische Trivialaphorismen, verdonnern den Zuschauer, statt ihn frei sehen zu lassen, zu genormtem Bedeutungssehen.'⁵⁸; 'Es muß gezeigt werden, daß schon der erste Blick des Zuschauers gelenkt ist.'⁵⁹

Handke expands this task into a wider social context here, something we saw was lacking in the earlier Das Standrecht, as he links the manipulation and petrification of our aesthetic awareness with our perception of social reality. The mechanisms which operate within the theatre also operate outside it:

Gerade diese Natürlichkeit als falsch, als Dramaturgie den Zuschauer sehen zu lassen, wäre die einzige Möglichkeit, die Situation als Theatermechanismus durchschauen zu lassen, damit auch ähnliche Situationen in der Außenwelt. 60

Die Zuschauer müßten lernen, Natur als Dramaturgie zu durchschauen, als Dramaturgie des herrschenden Systems, nicht nur im Theater, auch sonst. Aber im Theater sollten sie das lernen, sollten sie mit dem fremden Blick anfangen. 61

This work of exposure, of making things transparent in their mechanical functioning is what Publikumsbeschimpfung attempts to achieve. By refining and sharpening the audience's perception Handke hopes to induce 'der fremde Blick', hopes to renew the audience's understanding of theatre. At this point, however, Handke draws back. True to his unwillingness to commit himself fully in any one direction, the 'Sprechstücke' must be content with this task of promoting awareness. The direction in which this awareness could be channelled, other than in a vague, self-perpetuating antipathy towards any systematic commitment, is deliberately left open: '(Die Sprechstücke) wollen nicht revolutionieren, sondern aufmerksam machen.'⁶²

With the weight of this theoretical approach behind it, it is a great surprise that Handke's play fails through a number of basic contradictions within it, and that by far the greatest contradiction is the insulting itself, which gives the play its title. The exposure of the mechanistic

rituals of the theatre extends from their manifestation in the actual events on the stage and the audience's relationship to them, to the various social rituals the audience has participated in even before entering the building. The theatre visit in its entirety is presented as being governed by a set of rules and prescriptions for behaviour and expectation. It is Handke's strategy 'dem Publikum Theater und Theaterkonsum als Äußerungsweisen einer Dramaturgie vor Augen zu führen.'⁶³ This ritualised dramaturgy depends upon the survival of the two traditional relationships mentioned earlier. For Handke the disruption and destruction of these relationships is crucial. To do this, the traditional distinguishing concepts of spectator and stage must be eliminated; the result will be not a new theatre and audience but a different one: 'Das Stück ist nicht geschrieben, damit das übliche Publikum einem anderen Publikum Platz macht, sondern damit das übliche Publikum ein anderes Publikum wird.'⁶⁴

The process begins with a direct emphasis on and affirmation of these theatrical rituals and expectations. The spectators are seen as role-players within the traditional 'meaning' given to a night at the theatre. Hence, the atmosphere before the performance must be that which is usually expected in order for the contrast between it and the content of the play to be most noticeable:

Auch im Zuschauerraum ist für die gewohnte Theaterstimmung zu sorgen. Die Platzanweiser vervollkommen noch ihre gewohnte Beflissenheit, bewegen sich noch formeller und zeremonieller, dämpfen ihr gewohntes Flüstern noch stilvoller (...) Die Programme sind in vornehmer Ausstattung gehalten. Das wiederholte Klingelsignal darf nicht vergessen werden. ⁶⁵

This manipulation of the audience's expectations - Handke's

'gelenkter Blick' - is undertaken in order to minimise as far as possible any anticipation of the play on the part of the spectators other than their traditional anticipation. The disruption of tradition begins with a contrast between this produced anticipation and the reality of the performance: 'Sie werden hier nichts von dem sehen, was Sie hier immer gesehen haben' (PB 19). This extends to the stage itself, which, in spite of the noise of furniture being moved before the curtain went up, is empty. It also extends to the lighting, which, far from fixing and concentrating the audience's attention on the stage, reinforcing the gap and thereby producing its view, diffuses this concentration by illuminating both stage area and auditorium with equal intensity. There is, indeed, no need for such concentration, for 'Sie werden kein Schauspiel sehen (...) Sie werden kein Spiel sehen. Hier wird nicht gespielt werden' (PB 19). The preconditions for the disruption of the audience's expectations are thus established within the first few minutes, the relationships of stage to world and stage to audience are already under attack.

The disruption of the traditional distance between stage and audience serves to physically unify the speakers and the spectators as the notion of the stage representing another world breaks down: 'Ihre Atemzüge werden einander ähnlich. Ihre Atemzüge passen sich den Atemzügen an, mit denen wir sprechen. Sie atmen, wie wir sprechen. Wir und Sie bilden allmählich eine Einheit' (PB 20). Out of this comes a new immediacy, whereby the perspective within the underlying communicative situation changes:

'Sie schauen uns nicht zu. Sie schauen uns an (...) Sie hören uns nicht zu. Sie hören uns an' (PB 20). The tradition of the stage, set and actors 'meaning' or representing something collapses as the emphasis is placed upon the 'here and now' with the audience firmly in the middle: 'Sie sind keine Zaungäste mehr. Sie sind das Thema. Sie sind im Blickpunkt. Sie sind im Brennpunkt unserer Worte' (PB 21-2).

An audience with predetermined ideas about the theatre, with expectations of a picture of reality, with the willingness to believe that this picture of reality actually is a reality, perhaps at another time and place, with the belief that such a theatre of representation, where things can stand for other things rather than themselves, is a 'natural' theatre, such an audience is confronted with an anti-illusionist theatre without causality, without representation, which exists only at that time and in that place. An audience, which before was spoken to indirectly is now spoken at directly. An audience, whose reverence of theatrical ritual extended to the two hours before and after the performance, is told in the greatest detail what it has so far done and what it will soon do, in order to highlight its predictability, its pattern. An audience with expectations of the theatre as a place for meaning, significance, 'Bedeutung' - 'Die Spiele hier waren nicht Zeitvertreib, oder sie waren nicht Zeitvertreib allein. Sie waren Bedeutung' (PB 38) - is presented with a theatre devoid of the possibility of the employment of such models of perception: 'Denn wir stellen nichts dar und wir sind nicht andere als die, die wir sind. Wir spielen nicht

einmal uns selber. Wir sprechen. Nichts ist hier erfunden. Nichts ist nachgemacht. Nichts ist Tatsache. Nichts ist Ihrer Phantasie überlassen' (PB 41). An audience, which before had accepted events and actions arranged into plot, sub-plot, climax or denouement is now served words and the 'natural forms of expression in reality', albeit ironically imitated, without the support of fiction: 'Der Zuschauer braucht nicht erst in eine Geschichte hineinzukommen, es brauchen ihm weder Vorgeschichten noch Nachgeschichten erzählt zu werden: auf der Bühne gibt es nur das Jetzt, das auch das Jetzt des Zuschauers ist.'⁶⁶

The supposed elimination of any references in the play to any reality other than the 'here and now' forces the audience into a central position as they themselves are also clearly part of this 'here and now'. The intention of the 'speaking play' then becomes clear. Not only is the traditional concept of the theatre 'denaturalised', but also the audience, as essential a component of theatre as the play itself, is made aware of its own part within that tradition: 'Dadurch, daß wir zu Ihnen sprechen, können Sie sich Ihrer bewußt werden. Weil wir Sie ansprechen, gewinnen Sie an Selbstbewußtsein' (PB 34). An audience, which had hitherto clung rigidly to its 'natural' theatre in all its aspects is shown the artificial construction of such a theatre. In this way the piece earns its title of 'Vorrede', because it is the first step in the process of awakening out of the acceptance as natural of what is a specific historical phenomenon. Handke's later banning of further performances of the piece and his declared intention, as yet unrealised, to write a second

part show in turn his own awareness of the play's temporary nature. It cannot always function as a preface for the 'here and now', but becomes itself an historical event, part of a tradition, which is merely reproduced and imitated in subsequent performances.

Some critics have indeed argued that Publikumsbeschimpfung employs methods, which are by no means innovative in terms of the history of the theatre⁶⁷, and one cannot but agree that speaking directly to the audience and even insulting it are devices, which have been used before. One might, in Handke's defence, argue that what is crucial is precisely the use to which these devices are put - although this would be contradictory to his own arguments about methods of representation losing their effectiveness with time -, but even here one finds oneself arguing against Handke. With particular reference to the actual offending of the audience at the end of the piece, any defender of Handke finds him- or herself in a dilemma. He cannot argue that the device is particularly innovative in keeping with Handke's intention, or indeed with his understanding of the intention, as Handke sees it, of the whole of modern theatre: 'Das moderne Drama besteht aus Ausbruchversuchen. Es versucht auszubrechen aus der Welt des Theaters, in die es jahrhundertelange Konvention eingekapselt hat.'⁶⁸ Nor, indeed, can he argue that the particular use of the device is significant, because, as we shall see, Handke's use of it contradicts the argument of the first two thirds of the play.

Handke's own explanation in the text of the function of the insulting is confusing: 'Sie werden beschimpft

werden, weil auch das Beschimpfen eine Art ist, mit Ihnen zu reden' (PB 44). But, is insulting someone a method of communication, of speaking with someone, or a method of not allowing two-way communication to take place? 'Indem wir beschimpfen, können wir unmittelbar werden. Wir können einen Funken überspringen lassen' (PB 44). This is in direct contradiction to an earlier sentence: 'Es wird kein Funken von uns zu Ihnen überspringen' (PB 21). The reason for this latter statement was that the gap between actors and audience, over which the spark was to jump, had supposedly been eliminated. However, the justification for the insulting - to get 'closer' and more 'direct' - presupposes the continued existence of this gap and, what is more important, serves in any case only to re-inforce it by casting the audience in the role of actors in a performance and the speakers on the stage in the role of critics or audience.

Handke's claim that Publikumsbeschimpfung is 'unmittelbares Theater'⁶⁹ does not only mean that it speaks directly to the audience, but also that it has no need for indirect fictional arrangements to transport its meaning: 'Es braucht nicht die Vermittlung einer Geschichte, damit Theater entsteht.'⁶⁹ But, of course, fiction is only one of many ways of arranging material into an organised text, and Publikumsbeschimpfung is definitely an organised text. The piece may concentrate on the 'words and sentences' of reality, but, as in Der Hausierer, Handke constructs an organised text through unity of theme, repetition of words, rhythms and sentence constructions, and associative links between the sentences⁷⁰, and this in spite of the intention

of breaking through the established organisation of the-
atrical experience. Although Handke's play sets out to
disrupt traditional theatrical relationships, its own
disruption in turn at its second performance in Frankfurt
highlights and underlines its ultimate dependence upon
such relationships:

Die Besucher, vornehmlich die jüngeren Jahrgänge,
vermehrten den an diesem Abend gesprochenen Bühnen-
text um etwa ein Drittel: durch Zurufe, Beschimpf-
ungen des Autors, des Verlegers und (ungerechter-
weise auch) der Schauspieler. Manche Teile des
Handke-Stückes wurden akustisch im Saal gar nicht
mehr wahrgenommen. Andere forderten das Publikum
zum Mittun auf (...) rechneten aber nicht mit den
Konsequenzen, die sich prompt einstellten. Eine
Handvoll Besucher erklohm schließlich die Szene,
trug Tisch und Stühle aus den Kulissen herbei und
wollte sich unter den vier schwitzenden und die
Augen doch sehr irritiert rollenden Schauspielern
niederlassen. 71

The irritation and lack of flexibility in such a situation
is a token of the rigidity of the text. Handke's Pub-
likumsbeschimpfung would seem to be no more able to cope
with the consequences of the abolition or suspension of
the traditional voyeuristic relationship between audience
and stage than a production of Agatha Christie's The Mouse-
trap would be. Hence, although Handke calls them 'Vier
Sprecher', the speakers in his play are really actors,
reproducing rather than producing a text. 'Das Ergebnis
steht nicht auf dem Papier fest' (PB 29) is thus one sen-
tence, which is flatly contradicted by the play itself.
Free improvisation by the actors around the theme (as
Handke allows for in his later play Quodlibet) would
perhaps be a step in the direction of consistency, and
would also serve to overcome another contradiction, the
illusion of the 'here and now'. Within the text this

contradiction is apparent in the references to the audience's preparations outside the 'here and now' in spite of the text's assertion that 'Sie haben kein Schicksal. Sie haben keine Geschichte. Sie haben keine Vergangenheit' (PB 24). On another level, the idea also clearly becomes problematic as soon as the piece is staged for the second time, where the words are not only a previously organised text, but also have a performance history. The audience's view is directed and manipulated then by the author's original organised text, by its interpretation in performance, and also by the actors' experience of past performances, which in turn further influences the play's presentation. The play acquires a past, a history, a tradition of production. As such, it runs the risk, in Handke's terms, of becoming one of the established ways of seeing the world, of becoming mannered and 'natural'. Perhaps with this in mind, Handke withdrew the play from further performance for a while in 1969, and in the collected edition Stücke I published in 1972 he recognised the importance of finding new ways of performing the piece: 'Wichtiger wäre es, neue Aufführungsmöglichkeiten für die Stücke zu beschreiben: Publikumsbeschimpfung wirklich nur als ruhige, vernünftige Anrede ans Publikum, nicht mehr Körpersprache als nötig' (PB 7). This somewhat tame suggestion only serves however to highlight the friction in the play between its intention to disrupt and its reliance upon those same relationships, which are the targets of its attack.

A similar situation exists in Der Hausierer, the third work referred to in 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms', where defamiliarisation goes hand in hand with

reaffirmation of a tradition, in this case the genre of the detective story. For Handke, the detective story, once a realistic method of writing showing 'real fear' and 'real pain', had become schematised, cliché-ridden and automatic. The work of defamiliarisation and renewal involves a division of each chapter of Der Hausierer into a theoretical and an expositional section. Within each theoretical section the process of defamiliarisation is undertaken by attempting to make the mechanics of the genre clear, though Handke approaches and analyses it from only one of many possible points of view. This is a process, which, Handke maintains in the essay, will be productive in that it will enable him to use the revitalised method to show again the 'real fear' and 'real pain', which it was once able to convey: 'Würde ich also nur mir diese Schemata des Sterbens, des Schreckens, des Schmerzes usw. bewußt machen, so könnte ich mit Hilfe der reflektierten Schemata den wirklichen Schrecken, den wirklichen Schmerz zeigen' (BE 28). This then is the task of the second section of each chapter, where possible sentences from possible detective stories are listed, which the reader then has to reconstruct as far as possible. The fear and pain results as much from the alogical sequence of sentences in this second part as from the content of the sentences themselves. The practice resulting from the theory constantly falls between two stools however. Handke dismantles the detective story into twelve stages, but then runs the risk of a particular story being reconstructed - in spite of his statement that 'eine "besondere, erfundene" geschichte wird (...) nicht erzählt'⁷² -

by firstly introducing connections between the sentences of the expositional section, - there are many sentences, which deal with the same figures or objects -, and secondly by calling the whole enterprise a novel, which awakens just those notions of organisation and plot, which Handke is trying to avoid.

The reader is, according to one critic, confronted here with an 'open work of art', which is characterised by its calling into question of the fixed division of labour between the writer as the issuer of meaning and the reader as its receiver: 'Dem Leser wird nicht ein in sich abgeschlossenes Werk mit festgelegtem Bedeutungsgehalt dargeboten, sondern die Romane sind offen für die Mitwirkung des Lesers bei der Organisation des Textes wie bei der Sinnggebung.'⁷³ But it is difficult to believe that Handke would have wanted to place so much freedom with the reader to organise the text, indeed an organisation of the text into a 'story' is something, which he would have wanted to obstruct, even though there are these beginnings and echoes of just such a story distributed throughout the book. This underlines one of the main problems with this text, that of re-montage. If the organising principles behind a piece of literature are exposed - and also of course emphasised - to the extent they are in Der Hausierer, then far from their presence being overcome in the mind of the reader, they are surely highlighted. This may then on the one hand be a source of anxiety within the reader if he is confronted with a series of seemingly unconnected, disorganised sentences, as was partly Handke's intention: 'ich wollte verfolgung, folterung und tod auch nicht mit

den üblichen mitteln der logisch glatt aufeinanderfolgenden sätze zeigen: die anordnung der sätze zueinander sollte schon an der darstellung des schreckens mitwirken.⁷⁴

But on the other hand it may lead the reader to attempt to overcome the lack of logic by trying to re-arrange the sentences within the boundaries of the traditional structures so fresh within his mind from the theoretical section of the chapter. As such, it is clear that the sentences do not contain experiences of fear or anxiety, as Handke would like to maintain, but rather attempt to generate them through their lack of logic and through their context within a demontage of the detective story. We are not anxious because a sentence speaks of a murder, but because it is flanked on either side by sentences, which speak of something totally different and unconnected. The reader apes the detective in trying to re-establish this connection, but in doing so re-affirms the genre of the detective story.

Even Handke's analysis of the twelve stages of the detective story concentrates on the notion of order, its subsequent disruption and its eventual re-establishment or re-affirmation. The murder is presented as a disorder breaking through a seemingly fixed order at the beginning of the story, an order, which has existed outside the boundaries of the story: 'Der Anfang der Geschichte ist also kein Anfang, sondern eine Fortsetzung.'⁷⁵ Indeed, such is the pervasiveness of the order, that it adopts the appearance of a ritual or ceremony:

Die besondere Ordnung zeigt sich dem Dazukommenden in der Form eines Zeremoniells (...). Die besondere Ordnung äußert sich in Verbeugungen, in einem Tanz,

in einem Kniefall, in einem paarweisen Schreiten,
in einem gemeinsamen Glasheben, in der Zeremonie
einer Mahlzeit, in einem Spiel. (H 9)

Such is the intensity of the order, that in the context of the detective story, where a murder is to take place, it appears paradoxically as a disorder. Its intensity is marked by the fact that it is composed not only of positive elements, but also of negative ones: 'Die Straße ist nicht leer (...) Niemand wischt sich mit dem Taschentuch schnell über das Gesicht' (H 10). The order is determined just as much by an absence of events as by their presence. The hawker's separateness from this order is communicated by sentences, which show a disparity between him and the order. This is conveyed through individual eccentricities within the ritualisation of behaviour - 'Der Hausierer klopft mit einem Bleistift gegen die Mauer' (H 10), or 'Er ist so weit gegangen, daß sich beide Schuhbänder gelöst haben' (H 11) - or through the breaking of traditional descriptive models when imparting information about him, e.g. 'Er atmet aus und ein' (H 11), which is a reversal of the normal progression and description of breathing.

After the first disorder, the murder, there is the attempt at ordering it in turn by recounting in the minutest detail all the events leading up to it, so that the murderer can be exposed: 'Die Ordnung der durch den Mord entstandenen Unordnung dient der Klärung der Unordnung' (H 30). This also extends to a registration of what did not happen as well as what did: 'Niemand hat aus der Nase geblutet. Niemand hat gedroht. Niemand hat gelacht. Niemand hat den Wasserhahn so stark aufgedreht, daß der Schrei nicht zu erkennen war' (H 38). This

ordering of the disorder also serves to expose the original order before the murder as merely the semblance of an order, a facade to cover the turbulence underneath. Handke's analysis then proceeds through stages of 'die Verfolgung', 'die Befreiung', 'die zweite Unordnung' (a second murder), 'die falsche Entlarvung', 'die Ruhe vor der Entlarvung' and 'die Entlarvung'. The final chapter is the triumph again of order, in that the disorder is fully assimilated and rendered harmless: 'Die Kinder spielen schon den Mord' (H 119).

Clearly, Handke's analysis of the nature of the detective story is only one of a number of possible analyses, and its weakness lies in the rigidity of construction he ascribes to such novels, a reflection perhaps of his evaluation of them as trivial literature.⁷⁶ He was not the only author at this time to attempt to come to terms with the detective story from the point of view of theory. Helmut Heißenbüttel and Dieter Wellershoff offered their own analyses. Heißenbüttel's essay 'Spielregeln des Kriminalromans', written four years before Der Hausierer, concurs in many respects with Handke's account. Heißenbüttel speaks of 'eine Exempelgeschichte, die nach einem bestimmten Schema etwas einübt', and of 'ein festes Schema, das zunächst drei Faktoren enthält: die Leiche, den Detektiv und die Verdächtigen.'⁷⁷ Investigating Ernst Bloch's maxim that the detective story is concerned with the 'Rekonstruktion des Unerzählten', Heißenbüttel maintains to be able to differentiate even more sharply, because what interests and stimulates the reader is not so much the murder itself, the starting point of the story, but rather the way the detective (and the author) unravels the various motives and clues leading

up to the crime: 'Es kommt nicht auf die Rekonstruktion des Unerzählten an, sondern auf die Rekonstruktion der Spur des Unerzählten.'⁷⁸ The strict schematisation of the detective story functions then for Heißenbüttel as a framework into which 'eine immer neue Kombinatorik der möglichen Füllungen'⁷⁹ can be inserted. This would seem to be the point where Heißenbüttel's largely positive analysis of the detective story diverges from Handke's. This emphasis on endless combination and variation is not enough for Handke. It is clear in the 'Elfenbeinturm' essay that variations on a theme are not regarded by Handke as innovations, which form his expectations of literature. Variations and combinations of clichés within the framework of an established, 'natural' genre can only reproduce reality in its established meanings. Hence the motto Handke places at the beginning of Der Hausierer, a sentence from Raymond Chandler's The Long Goodbye, also reminiscent of the image of a framework with various fillings: 'Es gibt nichts, was leerer aussieht als ein leeres Schwimmbecken.' The detective story is also an empty swimming pool, a container, - Handke calls it 'einen äußeren Handlungsablauf' (BE 28) - which can only be filled with dead cliché because its schematism rigidly dictates its content.

Wellershoff's essay 'Vorübergehende Entwirklichung. Zur Theorie des Kriminalromans' (1973) emphasises the work of defamiliarisation, which the detective story accomplishes anyway within the reader, whose life is otherwise monotonous and dreary:

Er (der Leser) will nicht primär die sozialen Realitäten der Unterwelt erkennen, sondern unter dem Anschein von Realitätsnähe von unerhörten Ereignissen

stimuliert werden. Er liest, um in aufregenden Phantasieszenarien sein von Lähmung bedrohtes Lebensgefühl aufzufrischen. Weil er in einer ereignisarmen Alltäglichkeit lebt, braucht er dringend wenigstens eine fiktive Verschärfung seiner Umwelt. 80

Hence Wellershoff sees the model quality of the detective story with its quiet beginning - Handke's 'Ordnung vor der ersten Unordnung' - and its happy end, the 'ideologisch und strukturell notwendiges Schlußritual aller Trivialliteratur'⁸¹ - Handke's 'endgültige Wiederkehr der Ordnung' - as crucial for the stimulation, which the rest of the story is to provide. Only within the strict boundaries of this model, where beginning and end lead out of and finally back into a world where dangers are eliminated, order is restored, where, as Handke puts it, 'die Kinder spielen schon den Mord', can the unreality of the detective story maintain its hold on the reader's imagination. Wellershoff registers an increasing irritation and stimulation of the reader through the destruction and alienation of the habitual ways of seeing and writing about the world. Referring to Robbe-Grillet's detective stories he writes:

(Robbe-Grillet) beharrt (...) auf der Entfremdung als schöpferischer Ausgangssituation. Sie ist der Nullzustand, von dem aus die Konstituierung der Welt neu beginnen kann (...) Er macht (...) deutlich, daß es zunächst einmal darauf ankam, alle gewohnten Vermittlungen zwischen dem Ich und der Welt zu zerreißen. 82

This analysis marks out the weakness in Handke's novel. His strategy of making the reader acutely aware of the rigidity of the model behind the detective story, far from leading to a liberation or a 'zero position', in which new experience of reality - Handke's 'wirklicher Schrecken (...) wirklicher Schmerz' (BE 28) - can be gained, only serves to emphasise and re-affirm that model in the mind

of the reader. No renewal or restructuring of the detective story takes place, merely reinforcement of the model in the first sections and tiring monotony in the sentences of the second sections.

If Handke's novel fails in practice, - he himself later described it as a book 'wo ein formales Modell eben als formales Modell erscheint und als nichts anderes',⁸³ - then the theory behind it is extremely suspect in any case. Handke compares his intention with Kleist's essay 'Über das Marionettentheater'. With reference to the schematic representations of murder, death and fear in the detective story, he writes:

In diesen Schemata erkannte ich, als ich über sie nachdachte, Verhaltensweisen, Existenzformen, Erlebnisgewohnheiten von mir selber wieder. Ich erkannte, daß diese Automatismen der Darstellung einmal aus der Wirklichkeit entstanden waren, daß sie einmal eine realistische Methode gewesen waren. Würde ich also nur mir diese Schemata des Sterbens, des Schreckens, des Schmerzes usw. bewußt machen, so könnte ich mit Hilfe der reflektierten Schemata den wirklichen Schrecken, den wirklichen Schmerz zeigen. Dieser Vorgang erschien mir wie die Kreisbewegung über das Bewußtwerden zurück zum Ausgangspunkt in Kleists Aufsatz über das Marionettentheater. (BE 28)

In Kleist's essay, art, the imitation and documentation of the original pose of the antique statue, is shown to be too mechanical and self-conscious, totally unable to reproduce natural grace:

Ich sagte, daß ich gar wohl wüßte, welche Unordnungen, in der natürlichen Grazie des Menschen, das Bewußtsein anrichtet. Ein junger Mann von meiner Bekanntheit hätte, durch eine bloße Bemerkung, gleichsam vor meinen Augen, seine Unschuld verloren und das Paradies derselben, trotz aller ersinnlichen Bemühungen, nachher niemals wiedergefunden. 84

Handke would seem to imply that a further documentation of art's mechanics will somehow overcome this, in that their new transparency will enable the 'real' experiences to be

seen again. But this is in no way equivalent to Kleist's formulation of journeying around the world, eating more and more from the tree of knowledge, that is, experiencing directly without the mediation of art, until we can, with an 'unendliches Bewußtsein', fall back into innocence.⁸⁵ Rather, Handke's novel merely tries to revive art, to find a different way of arranging what remains mediated experience. This directness of experience can never be achieved whilst art and language mediate between self and world, and yet without these this innocence must remain incommunicable, or at best it remains for Handke a mystical moment, as with Gregor Keuschnig in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung.

This movement into the mystical or abstract sphere is to become a familiar one in Handke's work, and represents a transcendence of the issues and problems arising from the attempt to break through the established images of the world, rather than a confrontation with them. In the next three chapters we will investigate how some of Handke's work addresses itself to the socialisation of our awareness through language, perception and social roles. These are quite clearly social forces, rooted in and changing according to particular social relations, yet with the exception of social roles in the biography of his mother, Handke does not present them as such. If the outer world lacks this specificity, then any emancipation from its pressures cannot site itself as a specific movement for change, but must deal with such liberation as a private matter within each isolated consciousness or inner world. Without exception, the strategies of emancipation presented in

Handke's work involve these private, mystical, abstract elements, and as such they turn their back on and avoid the final images of the world, rather than breaking and destroying them.

II. OUTER WORLD AND INNER WORLD: LANGUAGE

i) Kaspar

The direct, unmediated relationship between the self and the world, consciousness and reality, inner world and outer world, which Handke discussed in connection with Der Hausierer and the Kleist essay 'Über das Marionettentheater', is presented in Kaspar as being disrupted by the acquisition of language. The play represents a struggle for the terms in which reality, outer world, is to be signified. It also shows the consequences for the identity of the figure Kaspar of the enforcement of a pre-formulated system of coherence, of experiencing the world and expressing that experience. This public language - as opposed to the privacy of Kaspar's original sentence - provides him with a means of expression, but is also a mediator, defining, directing and limiting the possibilities of that expression and, in its position between the self and the world, filtering and ordering the experience itself. Kaspar takes on the public language offered by the 'Einsager', he becomes socialised into a model citizen, but at the same time is seen to lose his individuality, thereby ironically fulfilling the desire unconsciously present in his original sentence: 'Ich möchte ein solcher werden, wie einmal ein anderer gewesen ist.'¹ This attainment of an identity through the learning of language is itself one of the problems of the play, and that on at least three levels. Firstly, the question must be raised whether a person's individuality is constituted only by language?

There are other areas of human activity and interaction - play, work, family, school - which all contribute to the socialisation process. Secondly, is each person's individuality constituted equally? This is clearly also not the case. Socialisation research distinguishes between primary socialisation (family) and secondary socialisation (school), and this is a process 'währenddessen der nur mit rudimentären Instinkten geborene Mensch allmählich die Verhaltenssicherheit eines Erwachsenen erwirbt und dabei psychisch wie sozial die Fähigkeit gewinnt, als Individuum zum arbeitsteiligten Reproduktionsprozeß der Gesellschaft beizutragen'.² Primary and secondary socialisation processes, including the acquisition of language, are class- and gender-dependent, and the language itself is not the impetus behind humans living historically, but rather the result of it. This differentiation is absent in Handke's play. Thirdly, because language is the result of humans interacting historically, any manipulative function for language cannot be portrayed as being inherent in language itself, but must be seen as the result of the particular interests of humans within the prevalent social relations. To return to an earlier argument, language is a tool to be used, beneficially or manipulatively, and although it is important to be aware of how it can be used, ultimately any resistance to its manipulative potential must involve discovering who uses it and why.

In Handke's play-text however - some performances, it must be added, have deviated from this - we gain no insight into who the 'Einsager' actually are. They remain faceless and nameless abstractions, hiding behind loudspeakers. The

problem with such a representation is made clear by Rainer Nägele: 'Die Verteufelung der Technik hat von jeher blind gemacht gegen die Handhaber der Technik, denen es wiederum nur lieb sein konnte, wenn der Zorn auf die Maschinen abgelenkt wurde.'³ But, in any case, the cause of Kaspar's loss of individuality is presented as language itself, its structures, rules and order - 'Schon mit meinem ersten Satz bin ich in die Falle gegangen' (K 194) says Kaspar towards the end of the play, implying that language, its acquisition and use, is automatically concomitant with manipulation and loss of self-definition. The absurd conclusion from this is that any resistance to this process of objectification and alienation of the subject from itself must be resistance to language itself, indeed to any system of mediation between self and the world: 'Es geht ja bei Handke nicht darum, was für Meinungen vermittelt werden, sondern daß überhaupt Meinungen vermittelt werden, daß überhaupt Vermittlung in der Welt ist.'⁴ With socialisation presented by Handke as a negative process - in contrast incidentally to Anselm Feuerbach's positive account of the original Kaspar Hauser⁵ - there arises the desire for an escape and a return to Kaspar's initial naive state, the 'Grazie' of Kleist's essay, where systems of mediation between self and world fall away to allow a directness of experience. This is what Der Ritt über den Bodensee attempts to explore - regardless of the paradox that this exploration is itself mediated through text and performance, word and gesture.

When Kaspar arrives on stage at the beginning of scene 1 - his entrance through the gap in the curtain is

the theatrical equivalent of birth - he is the embodiment of innocence, of lack of knowledge and experience of the world he now finds himself in. There is no framework of intention behind any of his actions, for Kaspar has no memory and therefore no capability of linking individual experiences with each other to provide that framework. His lack of purpose corresponds to the lack of a future dimension within him as well - when he finally breaks through the curtain, it is through a gap, 'den sie (die Person) gar nicht gesucht hat' (K 107). This lack of an ordering framework is present also in his clothes, which are a mixture of various styles and fashions, sizes and colours. With no consciousness, Kaspar's face is a mask with one permanent expression, that of 'Verwunderung und Verwirrung' (K 108), 'der Zustand der vollkommenen Offenheit zur Welt'⁶, as he encounters the new, the unexplored, the uncharted. This lack of knowledge extends even to the possibilities within his own body. His attempts to walk around the stage in scene 3 are uncoordinated and inconsistent, finishing with him falling over, emphasising his clumsiness and strangeness in his environment, which is itself an extension of Handke's statement that 'er gleicht (...) als er auf die Bühne kommt, Franksteins Monster (oder King Kong)' (K 104).

In scene 4 Kaspar utters his first sentence. He clearly has no inclination of the meaning of the sentence, as Handke confirms: 'Er sagt den Satz hörbar ohne Begriff von dem Satz, ohne damit etwas auszudrücken als daß er eben noch keinen Begriff von dem Satz hat' (K 109). In speaking the sentence Kaspar is making no particular,

specific communication (to whom would he be doing this?), he is merely confirming in this scene and in scene 5 that he is physically able to speak, that he has the ability to use various types of speech act, without any notion, however, of differentiation in intention. Manfred Mixner argues that the meaning of the sentence is important: 'Der Satz selbst drückt die Intention aus, sich mit einer Person, die einen unbestimmten Zustand (Bewußtseinszustand?) erreicht hat, zu identifizieren'.⁷ and that the purpose of the sentence is 'durch Identifikation einmal eigene Individualität zu erreichen'.⁸ It is indeed an irony of Kaspar's sentence, this token of his individuality, that semantically it expresses a desire to become like someone else, but Mixner is surely wrong to see this, within the terms of Handke's play, as a gain rather than a loss of identity. But, in any case, to discuss the meaning of the sentence at this stage in the play is to place it firmly in the public, historical domain of language and communication, but Kaspar's sentence has no public, communicative function, because he has no history and therefore cannot produce meaning. Rather, it is a private utterance without meaning, a marker of unmediated experience, and that is why it must first be eradicated by the 'Einsager'.

Kaspar's sentence is a blanket reaction covering everything he meets upon. Each new conquest of a certain aspect of the environment or of his own body - Kaspar is as unaware of his own physical existence as he is of the world's - is followed by the sentence. As he moves around the stage, so he learns. In scene 7 we see: 'Er stößt wie zufällig mit

dem Fuß gegen den Schrank. Er stößt wie absichtlich mit dem Fuß gegen den Schrank' (K 111). Kaspar realises the agency of free will in actions, realises he can create actions for a purpose, and thus begins to acquire the historical dimension of experience. With intentionality comes the notion of causality, and with causality the anticipation and the interpretation of the meaning of actions, a system of coherence Handke is to try to escape from in Der Ritt über den Bodensee, and which is equivalent then to rejecting the historical dimension of human interaction.

In scene 8 Kaspar begins to come into physical contact with the objects surrounding him. As he becomes sensually aware of his own environment - he learns hot, cold, hard, soft etc. - so the 'Einsager' begin to speak, attempting to pre-empt his efforts to experience the world in his own terms by offering him the ready-made system of language. Firstly they set about destroying Kaspar's sentence, and thereby destroy the impetus behind his progression towards an individual identity. Kaspar's private sentence - the 'Einsager' say 'Du hast einen Satz, mit dem du dir selber schon alles sagen kannst, was du anderen nicht sagen kannst' (K 112) - acquires an ever-increasing 'field of action' through their suggestions, and the original lack of intention is overtaken by a multiplicity of intention, which attempts to introduce an element of self-consciousness into Kaspar's use of the sentence: 'Du hast einen Satz, mit dem du auf dich selber aufmerksam werden kannst; mit dem du von dir selber ablenken kannst' (K 114); 'Du wirst mit dem Satz auf dich aufmerksam' (K 116).

From their sentences it becomes clear that the 'Ein-

sager' represent a particular analysis of language. Language can be used in the process of familiarisation with the world, of possession of its objects: 'Mit diesem Satz gehören alle Gegenstände zu dir. Mit diesem Satz gehören alle Gegenstände dir' (K 113). Language is an instrument of self-orientation in the world and of the disorientation of others. Language is an instrument of dissemblance as well as truthfulness. Language is an instrument of ordering the world, of creating, restoring or projecting order on the world, of (ostensibly) establishing the control of the individual over his world: 'Du hast einen Satz, den du zwischen dich und alles andere stellen kannst' (K 115). Every experience must then be filtered through language, and this system becomes, according to the 'Einsager', the only mode of interaction between the self and the world - 'Du kannst dir nichts mehr vorstellen ohne den Satz' (K 115) -, controlling perception - 'Ohne den Satz kannst du keinen Gegenstand sehen' (K 115) -, movement - 'Du kannst ohne den Satz keinen Fuß mehr vor den anderen setzen' (K 115) - and time - 'Du kannst dich mit dem Satz erinnern, weil du beim letzten Schritt den Satz gesprochen hast, und du kannst dich an den letzten Schritt erinnern, weil du den Satz gesprochen hast' (K 115-6).

This enumeration of the possibilities within Kaspar's sentence is rather a limitation on him, in that it produces self-consciousness: 'Du kannst dich hören. Du wirst aufmerksam. Du wirst mit dem Satz auf dich aufmerksam. Du wirst aufmerksam auf dich' (K 116). It is significant then that, at the moment when Kaspar is able to perceive himself both as subject and object, his original sentence

falters, he hesitates, his mobility decreases as, by inference, he becomes another of the static objects on the stage, to be controlled at will.

Kaspar's sentence is finally destroyed in scene 17. It disintegrates from the point of view of content, in that the words become 'non-words', and formally in that the syntactical structure relapses into chaos. Even single letters, which Kaspar repeats in a last hope of holding on, are eventually banished. At the end he is completely passive. In conjunction with the inducement of passivity the 'Einsager' transfer from the use of transitive or active verbs - 'Stellen. Ordnen. Legen. Setzen.' (K 120) - to intransitive or passive ones - 'Liegen. Stehen. Sitzen. Geordnet sein.' (K 121). This coincides with Kaspar's loss of resistance.

The gradual process of the acquisition of a public language is depicted by the 'Einsager' as a source of pleasure for Kaspar, as it banishes the feelings of disgust and pain towards objects he formerly could not name. Before, everything was 'ein Ekel, weil du nicht weißt, wie sie heißen' (K 122), whereas now 'der Stuhl tut dir noch weh, aber das Wort Stuhl freut dich schon' (K 123). This in itself progresses through 'weniger weh' to 'nicht mehr weh' as language places itself between Kaspar and the world, acting as a protective filter against its strangeness, but also placing its own demands upon its user. These are expressed in Kaspar's first orderly sentence, which is a commentary on his own situation: 'Damals, als ich noch weg war, habe ich niemals so viele Schmerzen im Kopf gehabt, und man hat mich nicht so gequält wie jetzt, seit ich

hier bin' (K 125). This is also clearly a direct contradiction of the 'Einsager's' claim that the acquisition of words would be a source of pleasure. This sentence also demonstrates the acquisition of memory and therefore of a sense of time in Kaspar. He has become an historical being with a consciousness of identity and change.

His increasing mastery of language brings about an initial development in his awareness of the world. Scene 19 contrasts his present state of 'wie ich erst jetzt sehe' (K 125) - language as enlightenment - and his former blindness, although this was allied with a feeling of well-being: 'Ich sah weder etwas noch hörte ich etwas, und es ging mir gut' (K 125). The ordering capabilities within language become more and more apparent, both in relation to the outer world and in relation to linguistic formulation. It is no coincidence that Kaspar repeats the linguistic construction when describing his shoelaces, for language is the instrument and expression of order: 'Weil ich jetzt sprechen kann, kann ich das Schuhband in Ordnung bringen. Seit ich sprechen kann, kann ich mich ordnungsgemäß nach dem Schuhband bücken. Seit ich sprechen kann, kann ich alles in Ordnung bringen' (K 126). This capacity for order includes, as before, his body, and in this instance means a phasing out of differences between Kaspar and any other figure, a loss of an individual story or history: 'Du selber bist in Ordnung, wenn du von dir selber keine Geschichte mehr zu erzählen brauchst: du bist in Ordnung, wenn sich deine Geschichte von keiner andern Geschichte mehr unterscheidet: wenn kein Satz über dich mehr einen Gegensatz hervorruft' (K 127-8). The connection is

established between learning language and conformism, and this extends to Kaspar's clothing, which he begins to arrange as neatly and as conventionally as possible, divesting himself of his original, individual appearance. Similarly language produces a conformist picture of reality, so that the 'image' of an object generated by language becomes the true nature of that object. Words dictate reality, so that 'jeder Gegenstand ein Bild von einem Gegenstand sein (muß)' (K 129). Words become autonomous and define reality and objects exclusively, regardless of their actual appearance or usage: 'Ein Tisch ist ein wahrer Tisch, wenn das Bild vom Tisch mit dem Tisch übereinstimmt' (K 130). The existence and nature of objects, and of Kaspar himself, is immutably fixed through language.

From scene 25 Kaspar begins to assimilate the ordering models of language. Prompted by conventionalisms and generalisations, he tries to form further generalisations from single experiences with at times absurd results. The results however are not important. What is necessary is the learning of an automatic system of approaching the world, a reduction of experience to platitudes, a rendering harmless of all possible deviations from the norm, a conformity of consciousness. The lack of differentiation in Handke's hostility to the generalising capabilities of language is especially noticeable here. The sentences praise order, achievement and work, 'common sense', cleanliness. Some of the examples are patently absurd and, in the guise of 'common sense', in fact contain ideology, the product of specific social relations: 'Jeder fühlt sich verantwortlich für das kleinste Stäubchen auf dem Boden' (K 132) or

'Unordnung bewirkt die Empörung aller anständig denkenden Menschen' (K 133). Others, however, are rooted in more practical areas and can be said to be objectively true: 'Lasten sind umso leichter, je näher sie dem Körper sind' (K 133) or 'Den Boden kehren in der Bretterrichtung' (K 134). Such a blanket rejection of these phrases betrays a mode of thinking about language and its origins, which refuses to see them as intimately linked with practical and historically specific interaction between humans. Language does not produce ideology, it transports it or becomes infused with it at particular points in history. The crucial thing is to become aware of the processes, whereby this happens, to uncover how and why at a particular time and under specific social relations ideologically charged concepts become 'common sense' or virtues to be wished for. But Handke's desire for the unmediated self diffuses any such concrete analysis, as Rainer Wägele observes: 'Die Bloßstellung von Verallgemeinerungssätzen wird selbst zu einer formalistischen Verallgemeinerung größten Ausmaßes. Der Wille zum total unvermittelten einzelnen führt in die leere Abstraktion. Der Mühe des Begriffs enthoben, bleibt solcher Kritik die konkrete Konstitution des Allgemeinen gleichgültig.'⁹

This lack of concreteness manifests itself also in the learning of the 'Satzmodelle'. Models, whether literary or linguistic, are regarded with great hostility by Handke as they work, in his eyes, against enlightenment and towards a conformity of experience, moulding and limiting reality, so that this reality is not broadened by language, but compressed and bound. The 'Einsager' say to Kaspar: 'Ein

Satz hilft dir, über den Gegenstand hinwegzukommen, wenn du nicht wirklich über ihn hinwegkommen kannst, so daß du wirklich über ihn hinwegkommen kannst' (K 139-40).

On a simple level, the repetition of clichés for example, this argument may well be true. We would however wish to argue that the reason people use clichés to describe reality has nothing to do with the qualities of language per se, but with the kind of language available to these people, and any explanation of this factor must take social and historical conditions into account. But the model of the metaphor, which Handke also introduces, as well as such constructions as 'sowohl...als auch', 'weder...noch', 'entweder...oder' etc., is much more complicated. The explanation offered by the 'Einsager' is inadequate: 'Das Tier krepiert. Die Granate krepiert. Könnte das Tier nicht krepieren, könntest du nicht sagen: die Granate krepiert' (K 145). What Handke presents here as a seemingly direct linguistic connection ignores all those complex extra-linguistic factors, which contribute to the construction of metaphors. The comparison underlying the metaphor is not simply linguistically explicable, for it is not a linguistic relationship but an experiential relationship. Its linguistic formulation is the end result of a process of seeing, in whose determination is incorporated a multitude of contributory factors. That Handke regards the metaphor in a negative light - after all, Kaspar's despairing sentence 'Schon mit meinem ersten Satz bin ich in die Falle gegangen' (K 194) uses one - is supported by his essay 'Theater und Film: Das Elend des Vergleichens', where he attacks the 'addiction' to comparisons. Com-

parisons arise, according to Handke, because of inability to distinguish details, and, as such, are yet another means of avoiding a coming to terms with reality, representing a mediation between objects and direct experience: 'Die Gegenstände scheinen so nur dazusein, damit sie gegeneinander ausgespielt werden können, sie werden abstrahiert zu Vergleichsmöglichkeiten (...) Das Vergleichen schützt vor der Beschäftigung mit dem Gegenstand.'¹⁰ Handke's earlier 'Sprechstück' Weissagung had supported a return to basic descriptive relationships, refusing to enter into comparisons. No longer were people 'dying like flies', only flies were dying like flies. But comparisons do not, in our opinion, avoid consideration of objects, they are merely a different kind of consideration of objects, and to attribute a value to them as speech acts in themselves is to obscure the real factors behind each individual's use of language. It is a measure of Handke's obsessive rejection of mediation between the self and the world that a device which has conveyed such richness of observation and experience throughout the history of literature should be accused of impoverishing the relationship between the self and the world by acting as a barrier to direct experience.

Towards the end of scene 27 the 'Einsager' concentrate on the relationship between thought and speech. Language is maintained to be dominant over thought: 'Wenn du zu sprechen anfängst, wirst du zu denken anfangen, was du sprichst, auch wenn du etwas anderes denken willst' (K 151). The implications of this are that the structures of the individual's thoughts are determined and limited by the means of expression. Individual consciousness is defined

by the limits of language, (not, it should be noted, by the limits of that individual's language), individual identity is a function of linguistic ability. Kaspar attempts to define himself, but is unable to produce a valid statement. All he can manage is the tautologous (and Biblical) 'Ich bin, der ich bin' (K 152), which is immediately followed by the sentence 'Warum fliegen da lauter so schwarze Würmer herum?'. This is, as most critics note, a slightly modified quote from Horváth's Glaube, Liebe, Hoffnung, and is a signifier of a fundamental irrationalism, unable to be contained by the organising power of the public language offered by the 'Einsager'. Manfred Mixner writes:

Dieser Satz ist ein Bild von der Wirklichkeit, von einem Bewußtseinszustand, und nicht, wie die Sätze der Einsager, nur ein Bild von einem Satz. Es ist ein 'unordentlicher' Satz, wie es sein erster Satz war (...) Dieser unordentliche Satz, das Horváth-Zitat, ist ein 'poetischer' Satz, er läßt sich nicht durch einen anderen, z.B. einem begrifflichen Regelsystem folgenden Satz, ersetzen. 11

Peter Pütz agrees with Mixner, siting the sentence's origin in a 'trotz aller Folterung erhalten gebliebenes Reservoir aus Kaspars präexistentem Zustand', but values it only as one of the 'Indizien einer tiefen Unlust an der neuen sprachlichen Normiertheit und einer geheimen Sehnsucht nach dem Zustand vor der Anpassung'¹², and not as a weapon of resistance. Whatever the case, it is clear that Kaspar's socialisation through language is not yet completely achieved.

Kaspar is now still for the next thirty scenes as the practical uses of his new knowledge are explained. The 'Einsager' emphasise the ordering potential in language:

'Indem du diese Modelle auf deine Sätze anwendest, kannst du alles, was scheinbar in Unordnung ist, in Ordnung setzen' (K 153). This takes precedence over all other experiential modes: 'Wenn du den Gegenstand anders siehst als du von ihm sprichst, mußt du dich irren: du mußt dir sagen, daß du dich irrst, und du wirst den Gegenstand richtig sehen' (K 153). With this then comes the ultimate conformism: 'Du kannst dich ordentlich entwickeln' (K 154). Kaspar makes no response to this abdication of his freedom of future development and the 'Einsager' confidently proclaim: 'Du bist aufgeknackt' (K 154). Kaspar's loss of innocence, his gain in self-consciousness through language, is immediately emphasised by the appearance on stage of other identical Kaspars: Kaspar as subject sees himself as object. These show him various elements of living - noises, pain, movement -, whereupon the 'Einsager' are finally silent, their work seemingly accomplished. In the following eight scenes Kaspar parades himself in front of the audience. His increasing control over his own body is seen in his attempt to open his fist, although he does have to use the other hand. The final stage of realising that he can open his fist independently is reached six scenes later. In scene 52 Kaspar shows his ability to see and assimilate other objects - in this case, ironically, another Kaspar. He attempts, literally, to 'get to grips with himself', to define the limits of his own identity in scene 55, and in scene 57 closes the cupboard doors, the last vestiges of a previous disorder. The harmony of his surroundings, corresponding to his own inner harmony, would now seem to be complete and is greeted with a musical chord. He displays his sense of being

completely at ease with his body, crossing his arms, putting his hands into his pockets; his naturalness is supremely evident, as is his mastery of himself - 'Ich bin gesund und kräftig (...) ich bin stets freundlich' - and his surroundings: 'Ich werde mit allem fertig' (K 164).

The socialisation of this Frankenstein Monster is now complete. His usefulness and conformism know no limits: 'Ich habe keine Narbe unter dem linken Auge und kein Muttermal hinter dem rechten Ohr' (K 164). He is now at home in language - 'Früher von den Wörtern gejagt/ spiele ich jetzt mit jedem einzelnen Buchstaben' (K 165) - and with this comes of necessity a strong feeling for reason and method:

Früher war mir jeder vernünftige Satz eine Last
und jede vernünftige Ordnung verhaßt
doch künftig
bin ich vernünftig. (K 165)

Escape from this state of induced 'reason' is something Handke is to explore in later works, most notably the play Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus. Such is Kaspar's confidence that he rhymes his sentences ostentatiously, and, in reference to his original sentence, he asserts:

Ich bin still
ich mücht jetzt
kein andrer mehr sein. (K 165)

But we must enquire, along with Handke, just what kind of identity has been constituted here - 'Wer ist Kaspar? (...) Was ist jetzt Kaspar, Kaspar?'¹³; is he subject ('wer') or object ('was')? If the audience is not sceptical of Kaspar's control over his own identity and his world, then the stage is: Kaspar exits and the cupboard doors slowly swing open again.

Although Handke maintains only that 'der Text ist vielleicht folgender' (K 167), the 'Pausentexte' are an integral part of the play. They have the form, if not the content - which is at times nonsensical -, of proverbs, 'Lebensweisheiten', rules which always apply, universal 'old wives' tales'. This is especially noticeable in the last section, which deals for the most part with table etiquette. The texts are the products of a consciousness which believes in the compatibility of life and an overall system of order in life, whether this order be metaphysical, behavioural, political or socially conventional. They are an extension of the kind of thinking Kaspar has arrived at - a belief in the ability to order the world, to banish its inconsistencies and aggravations. That many of the texts are spoken by public figures and politicians suggests to Heintz that 'statt Kaspar der Theaterbesucher "seinen" Einsagern ausgesetzt wird'.¹⁴ As the cupboard doors finally open again after Kaspar's insistent declaration of the mastery of his world, so the noises within the 'Pausentexte' constantly suggest the existence of chaos or, at the very least, disturbance behind the order of the sentences, both in the associations of their content and in their irritation on the ear.

The second half of the play builds upon this suggestion of an abiding irrationalism within the figure of Kaspar. At its beginning Kaspar's mask has an 'Ausdruck der Zufriedenheit' (K 171). For this, however, he has given up his uniqueness, being joined now on stage by five other Kaspars. The function of these Kaspars is unclear. When similar figures appeared on stage in the first half they

were clearly extensions of Kaspar's own self; with the gain in self-consciousness he was able to see himself as an object, performing various tasks. Now it would seem they are separate entities, with whose 'education' in the manner of the 'Einsager' Kaspar is entrusted, although their physical similarity with him underlines his own public identity. But their exact function is important with regard to the eventual outcome of this educational process, i.e. its failure and collapse in chaos at the end of the play. If the other Kaspars are separate entities, then it is clear that this second process of education fails, a process which had however functioned fairly smoothly in the first half of the play. If the other Kaspars are in fact only extensions of Kaspar's own self, then it is clear that the process of Kaspar's education in the first half has now ultimately failed, as those irrational elements within him, which were suggested by the 'schwarze Würmer' and the cupboard doors, finally assert themselves to overcome the public, 'rational' language of the 'Einsager'. This has then consequences for Kaspar's final cry of 'Ziegen und Affen' at the very end, which will be dealt with in due course. It seems logical to assume however that the Kaspars here do have the same function as they had in the first half, even though the 'Einsager' do seem to invite Kaspar at one point to teach them.

The 'Einsager' anticipate Kaspar's task in the second half of the play by discussing, before his appearance on stage, the concept of 'In-Ordnung-Bringen', the basic task of language. Their discussion, however, has a sinister air about it, as it reveals itself to be rather a discussion

of physical force - the ordering of dissidence. Words like 'gesellschaftlich Kranken', 'Tracht Prügel' and 'Dreinschlagen' (K 173), words with obvious violent connotations, are used alongside others, the violence of which is more subtle, e.g. 'singen':

Beim In-Ordnung-Bringen
bringt man wohl oder übel
andre zum Singen
während man dann
wenn
alles in Ordnung gebracht ist
und alles was noch gelacht hat
gelacht ist
selber singen (kann). (K 172)

The most striking of these instances is reserved for the connection between beating a person and beating a carpet. The 'Einsager' speak in a completely 'matter of fact' way about violence, and the use of such language to obscure the true nature of their intentions serves to highlight the cynicism behind their final assertion 'so herrscht Ruhe auf Erden' (K 175).

The socialised Kaspar, one of the 'in Ordnung Gebrachten', now takes on the task set for him by the 'Einsager', which is to search for 'für alle gültige Sätze' (K 176), to reproduce the kind of 'Sprechmaterial' he himself was subjected to in the first half of the play. The task carries within it, however, a basic contradiction. The instructions

ohne Zwang und Schläge
aus eigener Kraft neue Wege
zu zeigen (...)
den anderen ohne Phrasen
und Sprechblasen
die Wahrheit über sich
selber erzählen (K 176)

presuppose an individuality - through the words 'eigen' and 'sich selber' - which Kaspar no longer possesses:

Der in Ordnung Gebrachte ist bereits der Korrigierte, einem von außen an ihn herangetragenen Gefüge Unterworfene, der (...) spontan schöpferisch tätig werden soll (...), indem er zur Sprache greift. Das heißt aber automatisch, sich mit vorhandenen grammatikalischen und semantischen Mustern, vorgefertigten Entwürfen und Schematismen also zu identifizieren, um (...) Authentisches zu vermitteln. 15

Using the microphone - an entrance into the technical world of the 'Einsager' - Kaspar describes his former state, where he was 'ohne Bewußtsein' both of his body - 'die eigene Hand war mir unbekannt' (K 176) - and of his environment - 'ich merkte nichts von dem, was um mich vor-ging' (K 177). Everything for him was subject. He had no idea of a division between himself and the world, no sense of himself as an object. This was clear not only in his use of a private language, but also in his confusion of outer and inner as these distinctions had no meaning for him: 'Das Lärmen und das Geschrei außen hielt ich für ein Sausen und Kollern innen in meinen Gedärmen' (K 178).

His new consciousness had enabled him to rectify this - 'einen Keil zwischen mich und die Gegenstände zu schieben' (K 179) - and as a result, the irritation is swept aside:

alles ist mir zu Willen (...)
für jeden Riß
in der Mauer habe
ich Sätze
als Lis-
ten
die mir helfen
die Lage nicht zu verschlimmern. (K 180)

As the light gets brighter, so Kaspar begins his task. As he speaks, so the other Kaspars make irritating noises which counteract and disturb the semblance of orderliness implied in the original Kaspar's sentences: 'Jeder muß sich

vor dem Essen/ die Hände waschen (...) jeder muß gekämmt bei Tisch erscheinen' (K 182) etc. Although the 'Einsager' come to Kaspar's aid, they can only produce a canon, 'der aber nicht aufgeht' (K 183), and this is, in any case, constantly interrupted by the other Kaspars. Eventually this brings about a change in the original Kaspar, in that he begins to question the language he has learnt. The irrational side of his nature - previously the 'schwarze Würmer' - now expresses itself, as Mechthild Blanke has noted¹⁶, in a quotation from the poet Hans Imhoff:

Was habe
ich doch
gerade
gesagt? (K 186)

For the first time, language is no longer able to order reality or the consciousness of its user. Before, the 'Einsager' had emphasised the ability of language to make Kaspar remember things; now, he begins to forget. A process of disintegration begins, but it is not a process which finishes with Kaspar regressing to his original state of innocence; as he himself says, 'Ich bin in die Wirklichkeit übergeführt' (K 195). There is no going back for Kaspar, he must remain in the public domain, but with the knowledge now that the language he has learnt is not sufficient to completely contain the irrational side of his nature. But, of course, this knowledge could only have been available to him once he had left his original state.

In scene 64 the original Kaspar too breaks into fits of giggles and laughter. Even more retrogressive is his thrice repeated 'Jeder Satz ist für die Katz' (K 188).

Initially he recovers, as the irrationalism within him seems only to have produced a temporary relapse. He begins to relate his own acquisition of language. He confirms the significance of his original sentence. It was used to cover all eventualities, all possible questions and statements. Similarly, during the learning of language, a word had such blanket meanings until distinctions were made. He gradually turns to tell of previous experience and at this moment language and sentences are 'nicht ein Bild von einem Satz (...) sondern ein Bild von Wirklichkeit'.¹⁷ Momentarily Kaspar uses language to express his reality, without it being moulded by the form of expression. But this is only momentary. The end result of the process has been 'Ich bin zum Sprechen gebracht. Ich bin in die Wirklichkeit übergeführt' (K 195). With the acquisition of language the public domain of reality becomes a necessary attribute - 'Schon mit meinem ersten Satz bin ich in die Falle gegangen' (K 194) - and any private world is incompatible with the language he has learnt. Kaspar's consciousness has been made aware of itself, he has become an object: 'Ich bin brauchbar' (K 195).

The last scene of the play shows on the one hand Kaspar's despair at his command of the language of the 'Einsager' and his resulting conformity: 'Bei jedem Satz wird mir Übel (...) Ich bin durcheinandergebracht; man hat mich in der Hand (...) Ich leiste keinen nennenswerten Widerstand: die Schuhe passen wie angegossen' (K 196-7). On the other hand there are flashes of irrationalism, which refuse to be contained. The other Kaspars - extensions of his self - set about destroying the order of the objects

on the stage by making things appear 'UNMÖGLICH'. The original Kaspar, as well as joining in with their filing of the microphones, begins to use sentences in a way similar to the way he used his original sentence, whilst at the same time being able to explain his intention in the public language of the 'Einsager'. This speech thus becomes an illustration of the struggle:

Ich kann sagen: die Luft schnappt zu, oder: der Raum knarrt, oder: der Vorhang klirrt, womit ich ausdrücken will, daß ich nicht weiß, wo ich die Hand hintun oder die Hand lassen soll, während ich, wenn ich sage, daß ich nicht weiß, wo ich die Hand lassen soll, ausdrücken will, daß alle Türen mich nur unter dem Vorwand heranlocken, daß sie sich öffnen lassen, welchen Satz ich in den Sinn gebrauchen möchte, daß mir die Haare in den Tisch geraten sind wie in eine Maschine und daß ich skalpiert bin. (K 196)

In the end, the markers of irrationalism win out. Kaspar accompanies the closing of the curtain with the cry of 'Ziegen und Affen', yet another quotation, this time from Shakespeare's Othello.

Whether this final cry is one of despair or resistance is an issue, which has occupied many critics over the years. Heintz sees it as negative, depicting Kaspar caught in a 'Teufelskreis', with his final action being 'die Geste des verzweifelt an seiner Situation Leidenden'.¹⁸ Mixner sees the last cry as one of opposition. For him Kaspar is someone 'der sich selbst in Frage stellt und sich schließlich gegen die "Ordnung" wendet'.¹⁹ Nicholas Hern agrees with Heintz, calling Kaspar's final realisation 'devastating': 'He (...) can claim only an arbitrary and contingent egoity. He can define himself only in relation to shifting standards.'²⁰ Heinz Ludwig Arnold sees with Mixner the fivefold repetition as offering some resistance, but notes

that Kaspar falls behind the curtain at the end: 'Und das heißt im Bereich der Bühne, zwischen Vorhang und Kulisse, aus der er anfangs hervorkam: verbindungslos, ohne Vergangenheit'.²¹

Handke himself rejects any connection between Kaspar and the projection of a Utopia: 'Kaspar ist ein rein anarchisches Stück: es gibt keine gesellschaftliche Utopie mit, es verneint nur alles, was ihm in den Weg kommt.'²² Yet we have hoped to show that the moments of irrationalism in Kaspar, which eventually culminate in 'Ziegen und Affen', do represent a source of hope for Handke against the normative, socialising power of language, an expression of resistance to an ordered world - what Mixner calls 'die anarchisch/ anarchistische Perspektive des "Kaspar"'.²³ A theory of language, however, which places the source of alienation within language itself - within its own rules and order, within its very existence as a mediating system between the self and the world - finds itself in some difficulty when it comes to exploring ways of counteracting or overcoming this alienation. Handke refuses a concrete reference in his play:

Kein konkretes gesellschaftliches Modell wird im Kaspar kritisiert, weder das kapitalistische noch das sozialistische, sondern es werden, im Abstrahieren der Sprechweisen auf ihre grammatischen Grundelemente, die Formen der sprachlichen Entfremdung, hier und jetzt, deutlich gemacht. 24

Any emancipation from such a situation of linguistic alienation must not, Handke would seem to say, apply itself to the particular historical use of linguistic forms, but must attempt to overcome language altogether. It must, in other words, regain the direct experience of the world, the

state of 'Grazie' in Kleist's essay. In Kaspar Handke presents the vestiges of irrationalism in the main figure, even after he has assimilated the lessons of the 'Einsager', as embodying some kind of hope or resistance. Handke is careful to say that this is no 'social Utopia', but - although the irrationalism is relativised, firstly by its unpredictability and, secondly, by the fact that these moments are themselves mediated, being quotations from other works of literature - nevertheless emancipation through withdrawal into the inner world as a means of escaping the socialising pressures of the outer world is a movement, which is to become increasingly common in Handke's works. Within the realm of language, two further plays from this period concern themselves with the problem and attempt to formulate the moment of emancipation more closely, and it is to these that we now turn.

ii) Das Mündel will Vormund sein

This play forms a bridge, both chronologically and thematically, between Kaspar and Der Ritt über den Bodensee. The initial impression however is of the play's immediate contrast with Kaspar. Whereas that piece was a plethora of words, Das Mündel will Vormund sein has no words at all. But thematically the plays are very close. The internalisation of socialising pressures to conform, learn and develop into a socially acceptable human being is given figurative expression in the play by the theatrical device of having the two figures turn the scenery inside out before and after the learning process. The title of the play, with its

desire for betterment, evokes Kaspar's original sentence, and the ironic fulfilment of that wish in Kaspar is mirrored in the final scene of 'emancipation' in the later play.

Das Mündel will Vormund sein complements Kaspar in that it takes up human behavioural patterns and models as its theme, showing them to be constrictions upon direct expression and interaction, in that they are the embodiment and instrument of power relationships. If language was power in Kaspar, then movement and gesture, the everyday 'body language', is the source of power here. If the acquisition of language brought with it dubious benefits for Kaspar's individuality, the ward's eventual escape from the power/dependence relationship with the guardian is also presented in an ambivalent light, where the internalisation of the power structure still manifests itself after the physical removal of the guardian.

The concern with patterns and models also extends in the play to the readers'/spectators' perception of the events on stage. The playtext is written from the point of view of the audience, indeed the author consciously allies himself with them by referring throughout to 'wir sehen' or 'wir erkennen', as if he had no control over the actions on the stage. And, of course, to a certain extent this is true, in that the audience's expectations condition their reception of theatrical events to a large degree. Handke's playtext attempts, as he had also attempted in Publikumsbeschimpfung, to confront and expose these expectations, but the difference is that, whereas in that play this confrontation had taken place on the stage, here

it takes place in the text, without any guarantee that this process will communicate itself in performance. What does undoubtedly communicate itself in performance, however, is the concentration on movement and gesture required from an audience, which cannot rely on the spoken word to convey meaning to it, and the increased awareness arising from this concentration. Each gesture or movement is performed separately, without the notion of an overall framework of plot, 'ohne Rhythmus', 'ohne Feierlichkeit', 'als ob niemand zuschaut', and is intended to be an aid to our understanding of how we perceive.

Within the playtext the reader's reactions and perceptions are written as yet another role to be choreographed. On the very first page we read: 'Rechts von dem Bild der Haustür, von uns aus gesehen, erblicken wir, vor einem Fenster, einen schief stehenden Holzpflöck, in welchem ein Beil steckt oder vielmehr: auf welchem ein großes Holz-scheit liegt, in welchem ein Beil steckt.'²⁵ The method used here is one we are to encounter again in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, where seemingly correct descriptions are then rejected or altered by the text, so as to make us aware of our automatic perception of phenomena. The example above plays on the supposedly predominant image of an axe in a stump in a farmyard scene, only then to retract and alter it. The predictability of our perception as an audience is documented further by Handke in such sentences as: 'Vor lauter Schauen haben wir fast übersehen, daß die Figur den Apfel schon aufgegessen hat' (MV 11). Or again, reactions are anticipated as in 'vielleicht sind ein paar Kerne auf den Boden gefallen; Hühner sind nicht

zu sehen' (MV 12). The only live animal on stage is a cat, whose function is to irritate our assumption as audience that all objects on a stage have a 'meaning' or significance within the 'fataler Bedeutungsraum' (BE 27) of the theatre. On the contrary, the cat 'stellt das dar, was sie tut (...)' Die Katze tut, was sie tut. Wenn sie von der Bühne geht, hält sie niemand zurück' (MV 10-11). Within the figures on stage, Handke also wishes to avoid the suggestion of any kind of hidden, inner meaning to their actions other than what they are on the stage when performed: 'Das Mündel: schaut im Kreis langsam im Zimmer herum, hinauf auch hinunter, spart aber den Vormund beim Schauen jeweils aus, kehrt mit dem Blick jeweils vor dem Vormund um: das wird so oft wiederholt, daß es seine Psychologie verliert' (MV 18).

These and other devices attempt to prevent the audience from applying any external system of coherence or interpretation to the play, from erecting a mediating structure between the play and its reception, and thus disrupting its direct experience. Some critics have also maintained that the play has no 'plot' as such: 'Die Vorgänge und Situationen ergeben (...) in ihrer Summe keine kausal zusammenhängende Handlung, fügen sich nicht zu einer logischen Geschichte.'²⁶ Each illustration stands by itself, with no developmental relevance to the pre- or succeeding one, there is no deference to causality.²⁷ The importance of the Bread and Puppet Theatre of New York is often mentioned in this respect. Handke saw the group in Paris in 1968 and defined its achievement as convincing him of the 'Möglichkeiten (...) des unmittelbaren Vorführens von Handlungen', which do not serve the

overall framework of plot:

Handlungen handeln von sich selber, und Wörter reden von sich selber (...) Das Heben der Hand ist eine Geschichte. Das Summen ist eine Geschichte (...) sie führen zu nichts, sie bleiben für sich allein sichtbar. (...) Keine Handlung ergibt sich natürlich aus der vorhergehenden Handlung, keine Äußerung bedeutet etwas anderes außer sich selber, sie deutet sich selber. 28

The result of such 'direct' theatre is that the spectator is left with each individual action, but without the framework of a plot in which to place it, in which to give it meaning. Some critics have seen Das Mündel will Vormund sein as an attempt by Handke to reproduce the kind of theatre he so admired in the Bread and Puppet group, but there are nevertheless quite definite indications of a framework provided by Handke, within which the play is to be interpreted.

Firstly, the title of the play imposes an overall framework of reference in its connotations of a desire for progression and advance towards a more powerful position. The title itself, as with Kaspar's irrational sentences, is a quotation, is mediated experience, in this case from Shakespeare's The Tempest. Secondly, there are certain actions on stage, which break through a purely illustrative function, and attain a position of comparison with previous actions, suggesting, through this self-erected framework, some sort of development. Thirdly, the manipulation of the scenery by the actors is clearly meant to support the demonstration of the process of internalisation of power structures undergone by the ward. Not only this: the manipulation of the scenery also indicates the isolation of the first and last scenes from the rest of the play, and it becomes clear that they are a mirror-image of each other.

At first the ward is alone, but then comes under the influence of the guardian; at the end he frees himself from this influence and is alone again.

At the beginning of the piece the scenery shows outside, and the basic, 'external' relationship between the ward and guardian is established. The ward is seen to be the very apparition of simplicity, eating an apple without feeling self-conscious, 'als ob niemand zuschaut' (MV 11). Very soon, however, someone does look at him, the guardian, and the ward is no longer able to eat as he becomes self-conscious: the basic power relationship is established. The guardian's appearance also suggests this relationship. He enters from a maize field (a source of hidden terror in many of Handke's works) wearing a hat, in contrast to the ward, who is bare-headed. The guardian has been working - there is mud on his boots - whereas the ward has not. The guardian wears a checked shirt, the ward has only a vest. The guardian carries a pumpkin, the ward has only small apples.

After the scenery has been turned around - 'was vorher innen war, wird jetzt nach außen gestülpt' (MV 15) - the relationship between the two is acted out in a series of short scenes accompanied by music, and has been preceded by a recording of breathing to suggest the terror of what is to come. The whole effect is one of a demonstration. The examples of power are taken from the everyday - people's feet colliding under the table and one person being forced to withdraw; the power of looking at someone in a particular way in order to suggest action to them (the ward fetches the newspaper). The first indication of the ward's desire inherent in the title of the play comes when the guardian

is reading the paper. As the latter folds the paper more and more together, reflecting his desire perhaps to limit the ward, so the ward begins to draw and scribble, firstly in a book and then over his arm - an obvious attempt to reproduce the tatoos, which the guardian possesses. The ward is eventually brought back under control by the guardian's look, and his actions cease.

At this point, a whole series of actions take place - standing, walking, climbing -, in which the principle of imitation is shown. The ward imitates every action of the guardian, but always 'one step' behind him. It is during this sequence that the first sign of the ward usurping the power of the guardian becomes clear as, for one moment, the roles are reversed and the guardian imitates the ward. However, the outcome of this is that eventually the ward is curled up in a foetal position next to the guardian, who is lying on his stomach. At this point, the imitation stops, and these final positions thus serve to illustrate still the basic power relationship, as the guardian refuses to follow the ward into this pre-conscious state.

The illustrations continue as the ward cleans up after the guardian. Handke is careful to note that the latter throws objects around the stage 'ohne erkennbare böse Absicht' (MV 26) - that is, the guardian is not trying consciously to assert his authority, rather, the hierarchical structure is internalised to such a degree that it appears 'natural' to him, just as the ward collects the objects without giving his actions a second thought. The guardian then begins to make coffee, and here again the ward's

actions suggest some progress towards a kind of emancipation, for his grinding of the coffee is a complementary rather than an imitative, subordinate action, although his acceptance of his role is still such that he needs no prompting to perform it. The next scene however shows a distinct rebellion. The guardian enters with the trappings of religion - the incense bowl - and proceeds to write the initials of the Magi on the door. The ward rebels against this indoctrination by throwing burrs at him - the force of his rebellion is of course relativised by the harmlessness of his missiles. However, the throwing does continue after the guardian has turned around and only gradually subsides. The ward has graduated from symbolic to actual physical rebellion, a rebellion which is repaid in kind, as the next scene shows when the ward's nose is bleeding.

The final example of the 'internal' relationship carries within it the most forcible instance of the ward's development. Initially the guardian exercises his power still by turning the ward around and around and then, having made him dizzy, throwing crockery and bottles to him, which of course he fails to catch. Then, suddenly, the ward catches an object. This moment has great value, as it is meant to shake us out of our habitualised perceptions and expectations. Handke's stage direction for the audience is 'Wir erschrecken' (MV 32). The gesture of 'erschrecken' is one which exists in the gap between expectations of reality - the form it is 'meant' to take - and actual manifestations. It is the shock we feel when we experience reality directly, when the world becomes

open and new.²⁹ Thus this moment is one of enlightenment, where conventions, norms, rules and perspectives are broken through. The ward capitalises on this - for the action of catching was not something which had been taught to him, he performed it of his own accord - and the next scene shows the guardian unsure of himself: 'Er weiß anscheinend nicht, wo er hingehen soll' (MV 33). Complementary to this is then the ward's increasing confidence as he follows the guardian around the stage, ~~treading~~ on his heels. The final attempt by the guardian still to maintain a barrier between them by shutting the door in the ward's face is thwarted by the latter crawling through the flap at the bottom.

After this exposition the scenery is reversed again. The following scenes depict the externalisation of the ward's inner aspirations: 'Das Innere wird nach außen gekehrt' (MV 34). The episode with the turnip-cutting machine occurs also in an early short prose piece Augenzeugenbericht.³⁰ In that piece the figure who is taught how to use the machine eventually uses it to kill his teacher. Although this development is not explicit here, we are surely correct in assuming, from the use again of the tape-recording of the 'terrible' breathing and the fact that the ward is on his own in the last scene, that the same thing happens. Certainly the rebelliousness the ward has shown previously would support such an action. In addition to this there is the further instance of this constellation of images in the report of the premiere of the play in Theater Heute of March 1969. Accompanying a collage of critical extracts put together by Handke and two others

are two photographs - one of a turnip and one of a man with his throat cut.

That the ward has adopted the role of the guardian is shown in the final scene. The ward enters, 'er trägt eine Blechwanne vor dem Bauch' (MV 37). This is a reflection of the initial entrance of the guardian, 'vor dem Bauch ein recht großer Kürbis' (MV 13). The ward no longer wears his overalls. He goes through seemingly independent actions, which are however extremely similar to the coffee-making scene - he fills a container with water by using a hosepipe and drops sand into it. The question arises: where has the realisation of the ward's aspirations led him? What worth is this new independence? The emancipation would seem to lead to senseless action, although this aspect of senselessness, of an action not being tied to some overall purpose or dictated by a power relationship, could be the measure of the ward's liberation - action becomes play:

Der letzte Vorgang zeigt das Mündel allein. Und erst jetzt in Abwesenheit des Vormunds findet so etwas wie eine wirkliche Rebellion statt: anstatt einer 'sinnvollen' Arbeit nachzugehen, wie zum Beispiel dem Rübenschneiden, emanzipiert sich das Mündel in einem spielerischen Akt, in einer Art Happening. 31

But the similarity between what the ward does and the previous coffee scene is unmistakable. The ward may have emancipated himself from the guardian, but he cannot undo the socialisation process, and any liberated action carries this process somewhere within it. To try to deny this process of the social and historical nature of language and the 'meanings' of gestures is something the figures in Der Ritt über den Bodensee attempt, with the result

that they fall through the ice.

iii) Der Ritt über den Bodensee

The impetus behind Der Ritt über den Bodensee is formulated by Handke in an introduction to the playtext:

Der letzte Gedanke an Kaspar wurde der erste Gedanke zu Der Ritt über den Bodensee: die in dieser Gesellschaft vorherrschenden menschlichen Umgangsformen darzustellen durch genaues Beobachten 1) der anscheinend im freien Spiel der Kräfte formlos funktionierenden täglichen Lebensäußerungen bei Liebe, Arbeit, Kauf und Verkauf, und 2) ihrer üblichen Darstellungsformen im Theater, die, mochten sie dieses freie Spiel der Kräfte in den täglichen Lebensäußerungen auch als 'falsche Natur', 'ausbeuterisch' usw. angreifen, selber doch ebenso ausbeuterisch und formlos nach demselben freien Spiel der Kräfte, den jeweiligen Marktbedürfnissen und Marktgewohnheiten, dem Gesetz von Angebot und Nachfrage funktionierten, wie die in ihnen scheinbar dargestellten Lebensäußerungen. 32

The theatrical process of the exposure of systems of mediation between the self and the world and the self and others must then constantly take into account its own mediated form and its assimilation into an established theatrical tradition. Throughout the play there are elements of theatrical stylisation and formalisation, which attempt to counteract naturalistic, illusionist theatre, in which the audience can believe in plot and character. Initially the audience is drawn into the belief that such expectations will be realised. The set for the play suggests a drawing room comedy. The elaborate staircase and the abundance of furniture are positioned so exactly that 'es schwer vorstellbar ist, sie woanders stehen zu sehen; sie könnten es nicht einmal ertragen, auch nur ein bißchen verrückt zu werden' (RB 63). All objects are in their place, it is an ordered world (the exact opposite

of the beginning of Kaspar), everything seems set for a play, in which the conventions are adhered to most rigidly; we are presented with a world resting in itself.

As the curtain rises, the action has already started - a woman is cleaning the carpet. It is as if we have entered into a story which has already commenced, and we can now take up our positions as voyeurs. Even the cleaning woman adheres to the convention - she is black. However, it soon appears that this is only a rather half-hearted attempt to maintain the convention, for it is quite visible that 'das Gesicht der Frau ist schwarz übermalt' (RB 63). The second figure we see, given the name of Emil Jannings in the text, is 'stark geschminkt, die Augenbrauen sind nachgezogen. An der rechten Hand, deren Nägel schwarz lackiert sind, trägt er mehrere große Ringe' (RB 63-4). This is clearly a theatrical figure, there is no attempt to have him 'be' a real person. A third figure emerges from behind a screen, in the text he carries the name of Heinrich George, and he is 'ebenfalls andeutungsweise kostümiert' (RB 65). If the appearance of the figures begins to contradict the original impression of the set and the resulting expectations of the nature of the entertainment, their action completes the task. In contrast to the maid, these figures behave not as if we have suddenly caught them in the midst of an action, but as if their existence had only now begun again after a long period of sleep - underlined by the stage direction 'Das Licht ist ein Morgenlicht' (RB 63).

Jannings opens his eyes slowly and 'mit brüchiger Stimme' postulates the possession of a past - '"Wie gesagt"'

(RB 64). George answers similarly 'mit brüchiger Stimme' - he even has to clear his throat twice - and he falls over at his first attempts at walking because his foot has fallen asleep. Jannings shares the experience when he attempts to pick up the cigar box, which he is unable to hold. It soon becomes clear however that the figures' behaviour is not conditioned by the demands of a plot, a story. Rather, their behaviour is a series of illustrations, in mini-scene format, of various social actions (working, shopping, declaring love), which have no readily comprehensible attachment to the environment they find themselves in: the traditional relationship of interdependence and coherence between set, character and action, and the resulting construction of a recognisable story is disrupted. Any structure in the play is provided by these separate mini-scenes, which share a common theme: the illustration of the power relationships, of a rigid system of rules and patterns within supposedly free and natural emanations of the human will.

We would do well to remind ourselves here of Handke's exact wording: 'die in dieser Gesellschaft vorherrschenden menschlichen Umgangsformen darzustellen durch genaues Beobachten 1) der anscheinend im freien Spiel der Kräfte formlos funktionierenden täglichen Lebensäußerungen bei Liebe, Arbeit, Kauf und Verkauf' (RB 57). There are at least two points to be made about this. Firstly, although later in the introduction he is to maintain that the play developed quite differently from this intention, Handke imputes to his work a social specificity. The forms of human interaction he is interested in are those prevalent

'in this society'. However, the techniques of stylisation, formalisation and abstraction, which Handke employs in Der Ritt über den Bodensee, constantly work against this concreteness and diffuse any specific representation or analysis: a similar situation to the presentation of the 'Satzmodelle' in Kaspar. The scene of buying and selling becomes then in Handke's play a game with roles - Bergner has indeed remarked just before, '"Es ist schön, zuzuschauen, wenn etwas sich einspielt! Es ist, wie wenn man bei einem Kauf zuschaut: Zug um Zug! Hier die Ware, hier das Geld! Hier das Geld, hier die Ware!"' (RB 89). The scene is acted out 'as if' it were real, but it is so clearly not: Porten wants to buy a gas pistol, is given a riding whip, she takes the obvious play money ('Theatergeld') out of her garter and pushes the change into her bodice, emphasising the sexual connotation by licking her lips and toying with the whip. The quite real economic processes are rendered harmless, and instead the playing out of roles or positions as such in the transaction is emphasised, regardless of what these positions or roles actually entail for people in concrete reality. Again, the target of Handke's attention would seem to be the very fact that such roles or positions exist, the very fact that human action is filtered through an internalisation of pre-formulated rules and patterns of behaviour, the very fact that - as in Kaspar - systems of mediation exist at all, rather than the concrete nature of these roles, positions and checks on freedom of action.

The one time in the play where there is an attempt to place the problem within its social context is the short

scene between George and Jannings concerning work. George has been ordered by Jannings to pick up the cigars and place them back in the box - picking up cigars is George's work, but he finds it difficult to concentrate. He is alienated from the work, so Jannings tells him to regard it as a game, as he himself does, then it will be easier. But this cannot overcome for George his consciousness of the true property relations behind the work; Jannings, as the owner of the cigars and as the employer, may attempt to use the notion of play to obscure these concrete relations - as Handke had done theatrically in the buying and selling scene - but for George, the employee, the alienation from the work still remains. Jannings says, '"Für mich ist die Arbeit Spiel"', to which George replies, '"Es ist ja auch nicht Ihre Arbeit. Wohl aber ist es Ihre Sache. Und an Ihnen ist es, mir zu sagen, wie meine Arbeit an Ihrer Sache ein Spiel genannt werden kann"' (RB 126). The different roles and positions within work are placed here within the context of concrete social and economic relations, but this remains an exception.

The second point about Handke's declaration of intention follows from the implication that these daily 'Lebens-
'äußerungen' are not free or patternless, but only function 'anscheinend im freien Spiel der Kräfte'. The questions to this must be: In what way is human interaction not free, in what way is its form determined, does the position ever change and, if so, how and why? Handke does not address himself to these questions, but merely registers that some form of mediation exists, and, in a speech given by Jannings, explains this through the undifferentiated notion of a

tradition establishing itself, so that it appears 'natural'.

George asks Jannings why people obey him, and Jannings answers:

Weil es ihnen natürlich ist. Sie haben es einmal getan, ohne daß ich etwas gesagt habe, im Halbschlaf oder weil es sich so ergab. Dann sagte ich es und sie taten es wieder. Dann fragten sie mich: "Darf ich das für Sie tun?", und ich sagte: "Du sollst!" Und von da an taten sie es, ohne daß ich etwas sagen mußte. Es hatte sich eingebürgert. Ich könnte mit dem Fuß auf etwas zeigen, und sie würden springen und es holen! Alles Naturgesetze! Man hat angefangen, miteinander zu verkehren, und es hat sich eingespielt (...) eine Ordnung ergab sich, und um weiter miteinander verkehren zu können, machte man diese Ordnung ausdrücklich: man formulierte sie. Und als man sie formuliert hatte, mußte man sich daran halten, weil man sie schließlich formuliert hatte! Das ist natürlich, nicht wahr? (RB 116-7)

That what appears to people in the realm of human interaction as 'natural' is in fact not natural, is not to be disputed. But the explanation given here of the erection and development of a 'natural' behavioural tradition, with no reference to the ideology of master/servant as a reflection of social and historical relations, is inadequate. To explain such a tradition with such general phrases as 'im Halbschlaf oder weil es sich so ergab', or 'Es hatte sich eingebürgert', or 'es hat sich eingespielt', or 'eine Ordnung ergab sich' is to view the problem of power relationships ahistorically, and to shift the explanation, as was the case with language in Kaspar, onto the fact that humans communicate at all. It would seem that, for Handke, this alienation of people from one another is an automatic result of human interaction - '"Alles Naturgesetze! Man hat angefangen, miteinander zu verkehren, und es hat sich eingespielt"' says Jannings. The GDR critic Kurt Batt comments on this in his essay on Handke:

Der Autor Handke (ist) über die Tatsache erschrocken, daß er sich mit Hilfe der Sprache und anderer Zeichensysteme über das Leben hinweghilft. Denn was hier in einem Interieur, das nach Broadway-Maßen zugeschnitten ist, vorgeführt wird, ist eine alles überschattende Entfremdung, die mit den ursprünglichen menschlichen Kommunikationsmitteln selbst gegeben zu sein scheint. 33

It is the same position as that towards language in Kaspar: manipulation and alienation reside in the system of mediation itself, not in the way it is produced or used. Hence, in Der Ritt über den Bodensee, any possible emancipation from such models and patterns of interaction must involve their complete rejection, which, because they are historical realities, must mean a rejection and transcendence of each person's historical identity - a process, which is doomed to failure from the outset.

At the beginning of the play Jannings and George are engaged in a struggle to assert power over each other through the medium of gesture - a reminder of Das Mündel will Vormund sein. A cigar box falls on the floor - neither bends to pick it up. Then, 'Jannings wendet den Kopf zu George. George rutscht wieder vom Tisch' (RB 65). This is a further instance of the process demonstrated in the earlier play. The difference in Der Ritt über den Bodensee is that the automatic gestures of the master to the servant do not always work: 'Jannings zeigt auf die Zigarrenkiste. George mißversteht die Geste und schaut, als ob es an der Zigarrenkiste etwas zu sehen gäbe. Jannings geht auf das Versehen ein und zeigt nun, als wollte er wirklich auf etwas zeigen' (RB 66). Jannings manages to recover here, but with this first instance of misunderstanding comes an illustration of the principle contained within the play's

title. The horseman rode across the thin ice of Lake Constance convinced that the ground underneath him could easily support him. Once in safety, the horror of the reality of his undertaking - mediated through language - is enough to cause him to fall down dead. The figures in the play experience similar moments of horror when they are shaken out - 'erschrocken' - of their confidence in the 'rapport between linguistic/formal reality and real reality',³⁴ and realise the unreliable nature of the support underneath them. The inference runs that, in our attempts to reach other people, to communicate with them, we rely upon certain conventions and patterns of behaviour and speech. These have become so automatic, so 'natural', that we deem ourselves to be in control of them and we do not doubt their comprehensibility. When these patterns break down, when misunderstandings abound, non-communication and confusion arise and we 'awaken' to the unreliability and mediated nature of these supposedly free and sovereign systems of communication.

This notion of awakening, identical with that of 'erschrecken', has, as we have already established, a positive value for Handke. However, we see that in this play there arise doubts as to the desirability of the realisations the figures achieve. At the end of the play they become completely static and separate from one another. They are unable to speak and can only briefly produce sounds, 'dann erstarren alle wieder und ziehen sich zusammen, machen sich ganz klein, wie erfrierend' (RB 154). To carry the image further, they would appear to have fallen through the ice. The antithesis of sleeping and awakening,

of unconsciousness and awareness, is reproduced in the motto to the play: '"Träumt Ihr oder redet Ihr?'" There are numerous references in the text to people acting in a manner described as 'schlafwandlerisch', to people rubbing their eyes or pinching themselves. The implication is that we live and speak mostly as if in a dream, not conscious of what we are really doing or saying. One critic sees direct connections here with Wittgenstein:

Informing Lake Constance is another aspect of Wittgenstein's thought besides the purely linguistic, as expressed in his letter from the front in 1918: 'Our life is like a dream. But in our better hours we wake up just enough to realise we are dreaming. Most of the time, though, we are fast asleep.' 35

Our reliance then on the mediated forms of human interaction lends our behaviour a supposedly 'natural' quality, but robs us of direct experience of the world and others. We can wake up to the true nature of the patterns in everyday, socialised behaviour, but will the shock of the experience of directness prove so great as to cause us to drop dead, as it did the horseman, or, at the very least, will it cause us to freeze and seize up, as do the figures in the play? Peter Iden comments on the ambivalence of the notion of awakening in his review of the play's premiere:

Handke behauptet, daß unsere Existenz, wie sie sich im Gebrauch von Wörtern und Zeichen ausdrückt, durch die Erfahrung von Unmittelbarkeit, einer Erfahrung, die Irritation auslöst, in tödliche Gefahr geraten kann (...) Wir funktionieren nicht mehr, zeigt das Stück an seinen Schauspielern, wenn wir dem Kontext unserer eingeübten Beziehungen auf die Sachen der Welt nicht mehr trauen. 36

Eating and paying in a restaurant, the gestures of possession, the gestures of love, the gestures of work, buying and selling are some of the forms of behaviour, some examples of the socialised 'Ordnung' Jannings has

referred to, which Handke demonstrates. In the realm of language he highlights various elements constituting everyday discourse. George and Jannings play the grammatical game of the argument, using the contradictory form 'im Gegenteil' (RB 74). They provide an illustration of a step-by-step 'logical' argument in order to win someone over, whereby the form of the argument is more important than the content, indeed it becomes the primary consideration: the form of the argument, with the complementary element of power, must be adhered to (RB 75-6). Later, George runs through a list of model sentences used to make it clear to someone that they are transgressing against the existing order: "Sie sind hier in keinem Wirtshaus (...) Haben Sie nicht die Filzpantoffeln gesehen, die am Eingang für Sie bereitstanden?" (RB 95). The underlying tone is one of menace and the will to dominate. Jannings tells a story and various elements and stock phrases of story telling become highlighted through their repetition: "Du weißt ja, wie das ist (...) plötzlich (...) trotz...oder gerade wegen (...) langsam...und leise" (RB 122-124). Still later, Jannings illustrates the amount of assumption a word or image carries within it, the amount of pre-judgement and meaning that is imposed, through the use of language, upon reality and, more important, upon other individuals. He begins to tell a story, but is interrupted as each connotation becomes clear: "Kürzlich sah ich eine Stewardess, aber eine häßliche -"; "Vor noch nicht langer Zeit sah ich eine Frau auf der Straße stehen, keine Nutte, muß ich dazusagen..." (RB 134). Such ballast, which of course marks these words as the products of particular social and historical relations, is for Handke a hindrance to the supposed ability of language

to express experience directly. An attempt is then made at one point to cast off the ballast, this historical accumulation, by reviving certain clichés, by giving them their 'reality' back - tantamount to attempting to reverse their historical development.

The figures go through a series of mimes, which deal with hearing a pin drop, seeing the sea actually glisten, seeing someone have totally empty pockets, inspecting the magician's empty cloth, finding the needle in the haystack. Each demonstration is accompanied by such exclamations as 'Kein Zweifel!', 'Es ist also wahr!', 'Also nicht nur in Witzen!' as the directness of the various expressions is 're-established' (RB 107-9).

This hypersensitivity towards language is contrasted with the Kessler twins. In their appearance they do not fit. The stage direction mentions of Alice, 'sie trägt ein Nachmittagskleid und schaut aus, als hätte sie sich in die Vorstellung verirrt' (RB 134). She places her suitcase on the floor and 'fängt unerhört selbstverständlich zu reden an'. The word 'selbstverständlich' acts as the sign it is to be in the novel Die Angst des Formanns beim Elfmeter: here its value is relativised by the nature of the 'normal' speech the twins produce, which is seen to be an accumulation of polite phrases and stock responses: '"Danke! ...Bitte...Danke!...Aber ich bitte Sie, nichts zu danken!"' (RB 136). The emotions of the figures - they are 'fröhlich' and 'heiter' at their mastery of these phrases - are thus ironised. After the Kessler twins have left, the figures practise 'normal' conversation, but its artificiality and the figures' unease and distance from it are seen in the

fact that all their utterances are in quotation marks:
 "'Guten Tag!'...'Guten Tag!'...'Wie geht es dir?'...
 'Gut.'" (RB 142). The spontaneity of the Kessler twins
 in using such phrases has given way to the realisation
 that even such simple, 'free', everyday utterances are part
 of a rigidly formulated pose: 'In der Pose sind spontane
 Lebensäußerungen erstarrt zu Zitaten.'³⁷ The first sentence
 after this series of quotations comes from Jannings, who
 misinterprets his own actions - he shakes his head but
 thinks it is George who is doing it - and says, '"Warum
 schütteln Sie den Kopf? Wollen Sie mir widersprechen?"'
 (RB 143). Jannings has reverted to interpreting actions,
 to immediately ascribing 'meaning' to them, a system of
 coherence from which, earlier, the figures claimed to have
 emancipated themselves.

This takes place initially between Porten and Bergner
 after the latter has become totally disorientated whilst
 trying to put on make-up using a mirror. She stumbles
 around the room, bends to pick things up which are behind
 her, and cries for help, 'aber mit der falschen Gestik:
 sie tänzelt dabei' (RB 98). Bergner suffers a loss of
 'naturalness' and ease of movement through using the
 medium of the mirror, in which her body's image becomes an
 object, an object which she cannot control. The subsequent
 alienation from the world and herself arises as a result
 of the realisation of this lack of control. Porten attempts
 to calm her firstly by physically leading her around the
 room and re-instating gestures within her, and secondly
 by speaking to her. The sentences Porten speaks are similar
 in both grammar and content. Porten has earlier urged

upon Bergner the importance of speaking in the process of regaining her identity: '"Machen Sie die Augen auf! Reden Sie! Kommen Sie zu sich!'" (RB 98). The sentences are not only models of the recounting of experience, but also the content of the sentences is that 'everyday horror' - 'der gewöhnliche Schrecken' - which is so important for Handke, the jolt out of expectations and patterns: '"Einmal, bei Regen, ging ich mit aufgespanntem Regenschirm über eine breite, dichtbefahrene Straße. Als ich endlich auf der anderen Seite angekommen war, ertappte ich mich dabei, wie ich den Regenschirm zusammenfaltete"' (RB 99). For Bergner then to be able to narrate a similar sentence of her own is a recapturing of that moment, a recapturing of the possibility of experience and its expression outside these patterns and poses: '"Einmal, während ich ein Tischtuch über einen Tisch breiten wollte, war ich in Gedanken (sie zeigt schön auf das Bild) am Ufer des Meeres und ertappte mich dabei, wie ich das Tischtuch schüttelte, als ob ich damit winken wollte"' (RB 100).

Bergner achieves this after some prompting from Porten and they continue to consolidate this attainment by a rejection of the 'significance' of a gesture. No longer does someone look behind him because he has a bad conscience: '"Er schaut sich nur einfach öfter um!'" (RB 100). No longer is, as is the case with the goalkeeper Bloch in the novel, every gesture, every phenomenon automatically seen as 'meaning' something. Helmuth Karasek calls this

ein befreiendes Moment, als Handkes Spieler auf einmal auf jedes deduktive "weil" und "warum" verzichten (...) Nicht mehr zieht einer die Schultern

zusammen, "weil" er fröstelt, sondern er zieht einfach die Schultern zusammen; die Schauspieler fragen nicht mehr nach dem "Warum", wenn eine Schublade klemmt. 38

In proposing a denial of interpretation Handke is attempting to have his figures overcome the mediated nature of language, so that each gesture will then have no signifying function, and will not be able to 'stand for' or 'mean' anything other than itself. In doing this, Handke is supposedly freeing such gestures from the dead weight of pre-judgement. The characters' reaction to their own loss of 'significance' as the producers of gestures is to act 'wie befreit' or 'erlöst' or 'entspannt' (RB 101-2). That this however can only be short-lived is recognised by Handke in his introduction to the playtext, where he writes that 'die Freude, von Deutungen und Beweispflichten frei zu sein' has 'die Form eines utopischen Lustspiels' (RB 58). A system of interpretation is an unavoidable concomitant of language and thereby of our existence in the world. Meanings are the product of people's existence as historical beings and to reject them is to reject the historical dimension of human interaction. To place a block between a sign and a meaning other than itself is to impoverish and deny the richness of connections within language, within historical experience. A totally unmediated system - were such a thing possible - would be, in its refusal of historicity or public causality, a private language similar to Kaspar's, with no communication possible. Thus the characters' joyful assertion, '"Wir sind frei? Wir sind frei! (...) Laßt die Lade doch klemmen!"' (RB 103), is undermined by its unreality. Henny Porten's cry of despair at the end of the play when she tries still, in spite of the others,

to maintain this 'freedom' - '"Ich wollte mir nur eine Zigarre nehmen! ICH WOLLTE MIR NUR EINE ZIGARRE NEHMEN!"' (RB 152) - is described by one critic as a 'Fanfare der Trauer über ein Dasein, in dem noch kleinste spontane Lebensäußerung mißrät und mißdeutet wird'.³⁹ But this cry of despair should be recognised as being private - the public, historical dimension of language is inescapable, and any resistance to it must bear this in mind. There is no return to 'direct' experience and expression. The opening music - 'The Garden is Open' - is invalidated, for, in Kleist's words, 'das Paradies ist verriegelt'.⁴⁰ man is now an historical being. Even the baby, or rather the doll representing the baby, a symbol of such supposed spontaneity and naturalness, is seen to rant and cry against the disorder of the open drawer, until George jumps up and closes it (RB 153). The figures, already freezing and isolated, are finally 'laid to rest', finally complete the fable of the Ride across Lake Constance, by being grabbed by the breasts and between the legs, the very sources of life.

Only one person on stage remains spared from this eventual demise - Elisabeth Bergner. At the end of the play she begins to smile, but then the stage immediately darkens. Indeed, Bergner, throughout the whole play, seems for the most part cut off from or immune to the action. There are numerous references in the text to her being in a state of sleep or near-sleep. When she first appears, she observes George and Jannings 'mit gesenkten Lidern' (RB 77). This is repeated a few lines later, and still later she stands 'mit gesenkten Wimpern' (RB 79), is 'traumwandlerisch'

(RB 80), and when George and Jannings try to play the same trick of numbering the stairs, which had so confused Porten and von Stroheim, she merely steps over them and pours herself some tea, 'als hätte sie all das in einer einzigen Bewegung getan' (RB 83), and sits 'wie im Schlaf', dreaming. After the entrance of Alice Kessler, Bergner is the first to speak 'normally' (RB 135) and yet, after the twins have left and the others are having difficulty in speaking and turn to Bergner for assistance, she 'scheint eingeschlafen' (RB 142). She only awakens again after the others' attempts to gain directness of experience and expression have collapsed. Her almost constant state of being asleep is indicative of the extent to which she is untouched by the realisations the others achieve. She, rather, in the speech which has direct connections with Jannings' later 'explanation' of how social order established itself, finds much comfort in the uninterrupted functioning of this order:

Es ist schön, zuzuschauen, wenn etwas sich ein-
spielt! (...) Wie wenn man zwei Leuten beim Sprechen
zuhört: erst die Frage, dann die Antwort! Jemand
streckt die Hand aus, der andere schüttelt sie!
Wie geht es Ihnen, mir geht es gut! Wie finden Sie
ihn, ich finde ihn in Ordnung! Jemand steht auf, Sie
gehen schon? Jemand seufzt, und man streichelt ihn!
Schön ist das! (RB 89-90)

One critic sees Bergner as a positive figure: 'Die ungreifbare, fragile Schönheit der Bergner steht inmitten des Infernos von Wahn und Gewalt (...) als Bild vollendeter Harmonie, hierarchischer, gewalt- und konfliktfreier Ordnung.'⁴¹ This harmony is due however to a total integration within the kind of order the others see through in their ride across Lake Constance. Bergner's almost constant state of sleep, whilst protecting her from the dangers of

the 'ride', isolates her just as much from the others as they are isolated from each other at the end of the play. If the intention of Handke's play is to 'introduce a wedge of estrangement between us and remarks, reactions, polite answers, stock responses in social behaviour we normally take for granted'⁴², then she remains untouched. Her final smile to von Stroheim is thus not a cause for some hope within the prevailing coldness, for she is 'mehr Bild des Todes als des Lebens, der Maschine näher als dem Gott'.⁴¹

Der Ritt über den Bodensee stands in a somewhat contradictory position in relationship to the wide notion of a 'text', that is, an organisation of experience. We spoke throughout our analysis of the 'figures' in the play, and used the various names given them in the printed version, but in fact Handke writes that these names are only provided for reading purposes, 'für die Aufführung des Stücks sollten die Personen des Stücks nur mit dem jeweiligen Namen der Schauspieler benannt werden: die Personen sind zugleich ihre Darsteller' (RB 56). Thus, the actors play themselves, but are bound to the text called Der Ritt über den Bodensee, and there is no room for free improvisation or incorporation of their own experience into the production. The mini-scenes of buying and selling, work, love, power etc., which attempt to show how these supposedly 'free' instances of human action are themselves prescribed, regulated, 'bound to a text', these mini-scenes are also bound to the text Der Ritt über den Bodensee. The scenes of 'emancipation', where directness of experience without mediation is postulated, are again still presented through

the mediation of the performance, the interpretation of a pre-existent text. Finally, as we saw in Kaspar, the text itself is bound to other texts through quotations - in the case of Der Ritt Über den Bodensee, Shakespeare and Foucault are the most widely mentioned sources. Handke's play cannot hope to deny its own historical existence - its performance history, its reference outside itself to other texts. The 'emancipation' it attempts to portray therefore, in its attempt to deny the historical dimension of human interaction, the historical dimension of the construction of the various 'texts' to which it is bound, is destined to fail. Subsequent attempts in the realm of perception or that of social role to 'bridge the gap' between outer world and inner world take on an increasingly cerebral, quasi-mystical quality, as this emancipation becomes more and more transcendence of the historicity of human consciousness.

III. OUTER WORLD AND INNER WORLD: PERCEPTION

i) Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bäuerlichen Kegelbahn

In the next group of texts under consideration here - Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bäuerlichen Kegelbahn, Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied - Handke widens his concern to an investigation of perception as a whole. No longer do only words and gestures have a normative, socialising function, but all perception - particularly sound and vision - is seen to operate as if automatically. Pre-formulated and internalised 'meanings' of experience dominate, so that individual acts of perception fit into a grid of expectation, which prejudges their significance and place within a system of coherence: the world becomes a mass of signs to be interpreted by the perceiver, the world mediates meanings:

Nicht nur die Sprache, sondern das gesamte Wahrnehmungsinstrumentarium ist automatisiert, was sich besonders an den außersprachlichen Erscheinungen, an den Geräuschen, verrät. Alle Dinge, die ins Blickfeld treten, sind bereits genormt. Jeder Wahrnehmung geht ein Vor-Urteil voraus, alles ist a priori schon gedeutet, und die Erfahrungen spulen nur noch mechanisch ab. 1

This mechanical functioning of experience Peter Pütz refers to here does not of course appear as such, but rather has established itself as being the 'natural' way of seeing the world. Handke's short prose piece Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bäuerlichen Kegelbahn, written after Kaspar and before the Tormann novel, addresses itself to this automatic functioning of perception, both through the activities of its characters and through its own form as a 'horror story', which it constantly undermines and

draws attention to, in that the writing also becomes aware of and questions its own functioning within a prescribed model.

The story is contained in the volume Der gewöhnliche Schrecken. Horrorgeschichten which Handke also edited. In the foreword Handke explains the particular idea of the combination of 'everydayness' and horror inherent in the title. Whilst this may seem somewhat strange to an audience accustomed only to linking the idea of horror with the notion of extraordinary phenomena, Handke maintains firstly that the notion of 'horror' is an essential ingredient of any story: 'Jede Geschichte, die es ernst mit sich und ihren Gegenständen meine, müsse von vornherein eine Schreckensgeschichte sein'.² This is, of course, consistent with the work of enlightenment, of defamiliarisation, of the breaking up of final images of the world, which Handke attributed to literature in the essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms'. Secondly, as in the poem 'Erschrecken', the subject of such an undertaking is precisely that 'everyday reality', which is so often automatically glossed over, but which, according to Handke, contains its own 'finstere Zustände', which must become transparent and open to the reader's consciousness. The presence of 'der gewöhnliche Schrecken' in a story leads the reader on to a re-evaluation of reality and, in Handke's case, also to a re-evaluation of the way the reader gains information through literature about this reality.

Part from the close similarity between the structures of the titles of Handke's contribution to the volume and the later novel about the goalkeeper Josef Bloch, many narrative elements are to re-occur - manifestations of

fear and unease, misunderstandings, misinterpretations and the disruption of expectations. The particular moments of horror in the short story are lent extra ~~credibility~~ by the situation of the two Austrians visiting East Berlin - the GDR functions as an exotic, 'foreign' land. This is a similar function to that which America is to assume in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, but within the context of a liberation from culturally specific ways of seeing. In the short story, the setting of East Berlin - the equivalent of the strangeness of Dracula's Transylvania in the traditional horror story - undermines somewhat the claim of depicting 'everyday reality', even though experiences specific to the GDR are relatively few. The main thrust of the story lies in its depiction of a journey and visit to a relative with whom contact has been lost, and the incorporation therein of all the various roles and rituals attendant on such occasions. In Handke's story, it is when these rituals and expectations of behaviour do not hold or become so exaggerated as to be noticeable that the moment of 'horror' bursts through.

This subversion of our thoughtless participation in 'everyday reality' had been previously a motivating force behind some of the poems in the collection Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt. In the poem 'Zugauskunft' (IAI 16-18) the ritual of the information desk at the railway station is extended to incorporate all possible combinations and constellations of such information. The fact that the journey described is fictional is irrelevant: the intention is that the form and the construction of the situation become clear. Heintz comments:

Das Prinzip der Verfahrensweise: durch Sistierung des Blicks auf einen eng umgrenzten Wirklichkeitsausschnitt und dessen überdurchschnittliche Vergrößerung erreicht sie, daß sich der Betrachter bzw. Leser überhaupt bei bis dahin achtlos Konsumiertem aufhält und infolgedessen auf den Eigencharakter des bislang Ignorierten aufmerksam wird. 3

In the poem 'Die verkehrte Welt' (IAI 32-5) Handke turns his sentences around or, in his own words, he uses 'eine Art Umkehrmodell'.⁴ The intention is not simply to present events in a 'mirror image', where left is right and up is down; nor is it only to change 'das aktive Wahrnehmen von Umwelt (...) in ein passives'.⁵ Rather, the new reality created in the sentences is intended to shake up and illuminate the rigidity of 'everyday reality'. Handke maintains:

Irgendwie hat man das Gefühl, daß irgendein Satz, den man umkehrt, nicht nur eine rein formale Umkehrung ist, sondern daß er auch durch die Umkehrung hindurch eine gewisse Aufhellung von Gegebenheiten, eine Aufhellung von menschlichen Tatsachen bringt. 6

'Ich gehe zur Tür, und die Klinke drückt mich nieder' (IAI 32) is mentioned by Handke as conveying 'eine Art von Müdigkeit, eine Art von Zwanghaftigkeit'.⁶ One could also cite 'Ich gehe zum Fenster und werde geöffnet' (IAI 32), 'Ich laufe ins Freie und werde verhaftet' (IAI 33) and, with particular relevance to Josef Bloch in the Formann novel, 'Ich greife nicht nach den Gegenständen, sondern die Gegenstände greifen mich an' (IAI 32).

It is noticeable that the moments of 'everyday horror', the jolts into new perspective, in Handke's story are linguistically similar. Certain words or expressions in the narrative become signs for such occurrences - 'statt', 'vielmehr', 'trotzdem', 'zumindest', 'jedenfalls', 'eigentlich', 'In Wirklichkeit aber...', 'freilich'. These words

register a contradiction to, a relativisation of, or a straying from that which is 'normally' or 'naturally' expected. They work against such expectation, even to the point of questioning themselves, lest they too should become part of the 'false nature' of narration:

Der Wasserkessel in der Küche hatte schon vor einiger Zeit zu pfeifen angefangen, ohne daß das Pfeifen unterdessen stärker geworden war; oder hatten die beiden den Anfang des Pfeifens nur überhört? Jedenfalls blieben die Armlehnen der Sessel, selbst der Stoff, mit dem die Sessel überzogen waren, kalt. Warum "jedenfalls"? fragte sich der Student, die gefüllte Kaffeetasse in beiden Händen, einige Zeit darauf. (GS 115)

There are some twenty examples of this jolt into the new perspective, the 'gewöhnliche Schrecken' Handke formulated in the foreword. At the very beginning of the story the two Austrians ask a soldier for the nearest florist's: 'Einer der Soldaten gab Auskunft, wobei er, statt sich umzudrehen und mit den Händen den Weg zu zeigen, vielmehr den Neuanrücklingen ins Gesicht schaute. Trotzdem fanden die beiden, nachdem sie die Straße überquert hatten, bald das Geschäft' (GS 112). In this one example we have three instances of words negating expectation: 'statt', 'vielmehr' and 'trotzdem'. The expectations of the Austrians, and those imputed to the reader, are that the soldier will turn and gesture in the direction of the florist's. He does not do so, and the fact that this is then mentioned in the narrative highlights the importance of the registration of the negative fulfilment - we learn not so much what people do, as what they do not do. The emphasis is not on their 'naturalness', which is false anyway, but on their 'unnaturalness'.

A little later in the text we read the following passage:

'Der Taxifahrer schaltete das Radio ab. Erst als sie schon einige Zeit fahren, fiel dem Studenten auf, daß in dem Taxi gar kein Radio war' (GS 112). Clearly, therefore, the taxi driver did not switch off the radio. The text and the student are fitting their expectations and pre-judgements *onto* reality, and these expectations are momentarily reproduced, only for the text to deny them in the next sentence, thereby also exposing them. The student's expectation on entering a free taxi is that the driver will turn off the radio he has been listening to to pass the time. This is such a fixed 'natural' sequence of events that his consciousness (and the text) initially perceives it. The perception model of the situation present in the student's mind overrides the specific actuality of the situation and dictates his perception of it to him, just as the models of language dictated the expression of experience to Kaspar. The text's denial of its own narrative becomes then another index of the 'gewöhnliche Schrecken', as it too undermines its own authority and coherence.

As the Austrians arrive at the door, events are described as if they occur without their control: 'Sie waren unschlüssig, wer auf die Klingel drücken sollte; schließlich, noch während sie leise redeten, hatte schon einer von ihnen auf den Knopf gedrückt' (GS 113). Later they are described as happening in an unusual order: 'Plötzlich, noch bevor die beiden das zugehörige Summen hörten, sprang die Haustür klickend auf; erst als sie schon einen Spalt breit offenstand, hörten die beiden ein Summen, das noch anhielt, nachdem sie schon lange eingetreten waren' (GS 114). Once

inside the house, they react to these events by grinning, by treating them as a joke, as unreal. The relativisation by the text of its own statements continues, reflecting the gradual breakdown in the Austrians' hold on their ability to predict and interpret events according to their expectations. The seeming statement of fact, 'Über ihnen ging eine Tür auf', is followed by the explanation, 'zumindest mußte es so sein; denn als die beiden so weit gestiegen waren, daß sie hinaufschauen konnten, stand oben schon die Tante in der offenen Tür und schaute zu ihnen hinunter' (GS 114), as the text tries to justify the initial assumption, which it had wanted to present as fact.

The Austrians are not the only ones hindered from a direct perception of reality by their expectations and automatic interpretations of events and actions. The aunt they visit suffers, in a way similar to the figures in Der Ritt über den Bodensee, from the need to interpret:

Die Frau deutete seinen Gesichtsausdruck, indem sie ihm mit einer schnellen Bewegung Milch in den Kaffee goß; den folgenden Satz des Studenten, der feststellte, sie habe ja einen Fernsehapparat im Zimmer, legte sie freilich so aus, daß sie, die Milchkanne noch in der Hand, den einen Schritt zu dem Apparat hintat und diesen einschaltete. (GS 115)

Misunderstandings increase as communication becomes more and more indirect; people's actions become more and more disturbed as their confidence in their control over reality, (which is a false control), recedes; the text becomes more and more insecure and attributes speeches to the wrong people: '"Das kann einfach nicht wahr sein!" rief der Student, vielmehr, die Frau war es, die das sagte' (GS 116).

The disturbance is only momentarily allayed by the environment becoming 'selbstverständlich': 'Je länger sie redeten (...) desto mehr wurde den beiden, die jetzt kaum mehr, wie kurz nach dem Eintritt, Blicke wechselten, die Umgebung selbstverständlich. Das Wort "selbstverständlich" kam auch immer häufiger in ihren Gesprächen vor' (GS 116). As in Der Ritt über den Bodensee and, as we shall see, in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, however, this is an ambivalent notion in Handke, in that such ease is seen to be the result of the complete assimilation of this artificial order mediating between the self and reality, it is the expression of the acceptance of a false naturalness within human relations. Certainly, here it is only able to grant a short-lived respite as the moments of anxiety begin to reappear, initially through simple misunderstandings, but leading eventually to the following totally disoriented passage:

Er bat den Bruder gereizt, die Zeitung zurück "auf ihren Platz" zu legen; die Formulierung "auf ihren Platz" kam ihm jedoch, noch bevor er sie aussprach, so lächerlich vor, daß er gar nichts sagte, sondern aufstand mit der Bemerkung, er wolle sich etwas umschauen, zur Tür hinausging. Eigentlich war aber, so verbesserte er sich, die Tante hinausgegangen, und er folgte ihr, angeblich, um einen Blick in die anderen Räume zu tun. In Wirklichkeit aber... Dem Studenten fiel auf, daß vielmehr, als vorhin der Fernsehapparat gelaufen war, der Sprecher des Deutschen Fernsehfunks das Wort "Angeblich" gebraucht hatte: in Wirklichkeit aber war das Wort gar nicht gefallen. (GS 117)

Constant contradictions of statement and intention serve to confuse and jolt the reader's perception of the text, as the gap between that text and the reality it is trying to express widens. Gradually the text begins to run on ahead of this reality and leave the Austrians and their perceptions behind, both figuratively and literally.

Figuratively, in that it formulates according to its own models, regardless of the actual constitution of the reality: 'Sie waren schon, die Tante in der Mitte, die Stiege hinuntergegangen, als - Kein "als"' (GS 121); literally, in that, at the very end, the text indulges in the ritual of a farewell scene and leaves the aunt standing on the street waving after she has given them the fare. The continuous use of the pluperfect tense serves to strengthen the idea that this has happened in the past and is now finished. Only then does the text reveal, in a final moment of 'horror', that the tram left without them: 'Zu spät bemerkte der Student, daß sie gar nicht eingestiegen waren' (GS 121).

ii) Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter

Just as we saw in our discussion of the short story how the perceptions of the two Austrians, operating according to pre-formulated models, overrode the specific actuality of the situation, so, in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, the particular state of Josef Bloch's inner world, his consciousness, mediates and moulds his perception of the outer world. This state is one of fear, of anxiety, of unease. The narrative incorporates the same principle Handke discovered and admired in his reading of Thomas Bernhard's Verstörung, where he says of the main figure: 'Was er von der Außenwelt erwähnte, war nur ein Zeichen seiner Innenwelt.'⁷

Although Peter Hamm, initially an energetic critic of Handke, felt justified in calling Die Angst des Tormanns

beim Elfmeter 'ohne Einschränkung (...) das beste Buch, das in deutscher Sprache nach Thomas Bernhards "Verstörung" und "Ungenach" geschrieben wurde'⁸, there still remains the problem of the relevance of Bloch's particular perspective on reality to the reader. Depictions of alienation and isolation are by no means new in twentieth century literature - Hamm himself mentions Camus' L'Étranger and Sartre's La Nausée - but the exposition Handke wrote in an essay for a volume in the Text und Kritik series, attempting to legitimise Bloch's perspective and behaviour, and introducing discussion of Klaus Conrad's study of schizophrenia - Die beginnende Schizophrenie - and its accompanying symptom of seeing objects as norms for behaviour, only tended to confuse the issue. Handke was accused by Marianne Kesting of choosing the wrong profession for his main character:

Handkes Monteur denkt ununterbrochen über Wörter und Sätze nach (...) Er empfindet Ekel vor Wörtern wie Reklametexten, er zählt die Wörter (...) Er wird von "Wortspielkrankheit" befallen - kurzum, dieser Monteur denkt nicht an Schrauben, sondern hat eine reguläre Schriftstellerkrankheit. 9

Handke was quick to parry. Three weeks later he attempted to justify himself:

Es ist von der zuständigen Wissenschaft festgelegt, daß all die hier dem Autor als Schriftstellerkrankheit zur Last gelegten Erlebnisweisen von Schizophrenen sind: Zählzwang, Gegenstände als Andeutungen und Wortspiele, als Normen und Verhaltensmaßregeln. Nur habe ich zum Unterschied der zuständigen Wissenschaft die Modellfigur Bloch nicht als krank denunziert, sondern mit Hilfe der Modellfigur so etwas wie die Geschichtsschreibung eines Einzelmenschen unternommen. 10

Thus, Bloch is an exemplary figure, as was Kaspar, except that whereas Kaspar showed what was possible with a person, the novel shows what actually happens: 'Dieser Vorgang,

Gegenstände als Normen zu sehen, soll eben nicht als krankhaft verharmlost, sondern als lebensüblich vorgestellt werden.¹¹ Apart from the somewhat odd language and opinion behind the language here - it can hardly be maintained with any seriousness that it is the intention of such studies as Conrad's to denounce the subjects of the investigation and thereby to render them harmless - Handke is on shaky ground when he takes the results of a specific study at a specific time and attempts to apply them to reality in general. Conrad points out in his study that all the cases he investigated were 'Soldaten des Kriegsjahres 1941/42'¹² and clearly the results of these investigations must be viewed within the context of those extraordinary times. Whether these results can simply be transposed into another social context and then presented as 'lebensüblich' is questionable.

The results of Conrad's study are summarised by him in the final chapter of his book:

Die Erlebnisanalyse unseres Materials ließ sehr rasch zwei Momente in den Vordergrund treten, die, im unmittelbaren Zusammenhang zueinander stehend, den Gestaltwandel schizophrenen Erlebens charakterisieren: das Erlebnis des abnormen Bedeutungsbewußtseins - von uns als Apophanie bezeichnet - und dasjenige, im Mittelpunkt zu stehen, so als ob sich alles Weltgeschehen um den Kranken drehen würde - von uns als Anastrophe genannt. Diese stets in Zusammenhang auftretenden Erlebnismomente scheinen uns den Kernpunkt schizo-phrenen Erlebens zu bilden. Sie sind Ausdruck einer tiefgreifenden Störung des Wechsels von Bezugssystemen beim Kranken. 13

The schizophrenic has, according to Conrad, lost the ability to recognise different frames of reference or coherence, and therefore to recognise that some actions and phenomena in the world are not intended for him but for others. He has lost the possibility of making an 'Überstieg',

which would enable him to realise that certain events do not apply to him. Rather, he becomes the centre of the world and is forced to perceive everything as having a meaning for him:

Wohin auch sein Blick, sein Aufmerksamkeitsstrahl hintrifft, "gilt" es ihm. Dies und nichts anderes ist das Wesen der Apophanie. Die Unmöglichkeit zum "Überstieg" läßt ihn zu einem Gefangenen im Ich werden, auf das er in einer Art von "Reflexionskrampf" ständig zurückgewendet sein muß, wodurch jene Kehrseite des Erlebens entsteht, alles, schließlich das gesamte Weltgeschehen, würde sich um ihn drehen. Hierin liegt das Wesen der Anastrophé. 14

This basic framework is clearly recognisable in Handke's story, but the important subject of investigation should be how he presents this 'Kernpunkt schizophrenen Erlebens' as something which is in fact normal and usual. Handke tries to legitimise the perspective in three further ways: firstly through Bloch's former status as a goalkeeper, secondly through his former job as a fitter, - and these two complexes will be dealt with more fully later -, and thirdly, somewhat surprisingly, through the fact that Bloch commits a murder and is 'on the run'. In spite of the exotic, totally unusual nature of a murder, this is presented by Handke in his commentary to the text as being one of the motivations for Bloch's particular perspective: 'Das Prinzip war, zu zeigen, wie sich jemandem die Gegenstände, die er wahrnimmt, infolge eines Ereignisses (eines Mordes) immer mehr versprachlichen und, indem die Bilder versprachlicht werden, auch zu Geboten und Verboten werden.'¹¹ Thus the underlying narrative model of the detective story is established, except that the actual hunt for Bloch is only referred to briefly at certain points in the story and we never come to know the outcome.

Rather, the pursuit is transferred to the realm of interaction between Bloch's inner world and his perception of the outer world, as his guilt and fear cause him to feel threatened from all quarters. Although this may provide a recognisable framework for the story, it hardly supports Handke's intention of presenting such a perspective as being 'usual'. We may well all feel guilt at some time in our lives, and even feel that 'the whole world' is against us, but the particular guilt felt by Bloch is scarcely a common one. At this point, the suspicion arises that Handke was so eager to incorporate his reading of Conrad's book into his text that he even derived the basic situation from it. Durzak points this out when he quotes the following passage from Conrad:

Denken wir uns, jemand habe eine schwere Schuld auf sich geladen, z.B. einen Mord begangen; (...) Was können wir über sein Erlebnissfeld aussagen? Zunächst dieses: Etwas ist unwiederbringlich anders geworden und kann niemals wieder in den alten Zustand zurückkehren. Zwar scheint die Welt noch die gleiche, der Stuhl und der Tisch, die Bäume und die Wolken sind dieselben, die sie vorher waren. Dennoch ist alles anders: Ihr Bezug zu mir, dem Täter, ist geändert; sie sind unschuldig, unbetroffen von Schuld. Damit sind sie von mir abgerückt, wenden sich ab, wollen von mir nichts mehr wissen, lassen mich im Stich. Ich falle aus dieser Welt heraus, bin nicht mehr in ihr eingebettet und geborgen. (...) (Ich) bin herausgefallen aus dem Zusammenhang des Ganzen. 15

Durzak remarks, 'Dieser hypothetische Entwurf Conrads ist der erzählerische Grundriß von Handkes Roman', but this would only explain the disintegration of the 'normal' frame of reference, because Conrad emphasises here the distance that is created between the self and the world. What is also present in Handke's novel is the encroachment of the whole world upon Bloch's consciousness, its unbearable nearness.

Believing he has lost his job as a fitter, Bloch wanders around the town before spending a night with the box office cashier of a local cinema. In the morning she asks him if he has to go to work, whereupon he strangles her. He flees to a village near the border, becomes involved in various aspects of life there, including the search for a missing boy, whose body he finds but does not report. At the end of the novel he watches a football match and sees a goalkeeper save a penalty. The 'story' of Handke's book is easily and quickly told. What is far more important is Bloch's inner life, his perceptions. He sees his environment giving him guidelines, instructions and rules as to his behaviour:

Buchstäblich war alles, was er sah, auffällig. Die Bilder kamen einem nicht natürlich vor, sondern so, als seien sie extra für einen gemacht worden. Sie dienten zu etwas. Wenn man sie ansah, sprangen sie einem buchstäblich in die Augen. "Wie Rufzeichen" dachte Bloch. Wie Befehle! 16

This becomes even more concrete later in the novel: 'Überall sah er eine Aufforderung: das eine zu tun, das andere nicht zu tun. Alles war ihm vorformuliert, das Regal mit den Gewürztiegeln, ein Regal mit frisch eingekochter Marmelade' (AT 99). The world becomes a system of signs imparting meaning, signs which have to be interpreted. This coercion to interpret is in fact present at the very beginning of the novel. Bloch's perceptions are presented by the text as seeming objective fact, as was also the case in Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bäuerlichen Kegelbahn with the two Austrians, only to be relativised in the next sentence and shown to be in fact only his (wrong) interpretation of phenomena or actions. The device used for this is the familiar one of the conjunctions 'jedenfalls',

'vielmehr' or 'zumindest'. There are at least ten examples of such constructions in a book of just over a hundred pages. The very first paragraph illustrates the principle. The reader is presented initially with an objective fact: 'Dem Monteur Josef Bloch, der früher ein bekannter Tormann gewesen war, wurde, als er sich am Vormittag zur Arbeit meldete, mitgeteilt, daß er entlassen sei' (AT 7). This is then qualified by the next sentence: 'Jedenfalls legte Bloch die Tatsache, daß bei seinem Erscheinen in der Tür der Bauhütte, wo sich die Arbeiter gerade aufhielten, nur der Polier von der Jause aufschaute, als eine solche Mitteilung aus und verließ das Baugelände.' That we interpret the actions of others is part of the historical dimension of our consciousness; to try to escape this was something which, as we saw in our discussion of Der Ritt über den Bodensee, was destined for failure. What distinguishes Bloch, however, is the intensity of his need to interpret, and the fact that he cannot control it, it happens as if automatically.

Bloch is so self-centred that everything seems to be significant to him; the whole outer world of action and phenomena seems to be directed towards him. This leads to the most absurd results, whereby the most trivial of gestures are laden with meaning: 'Bloch schaute zu ihr hin. Sie erwiderte, schon im Auto auf dem Beifahrersitz, seinen Blick, indem sie das Kleid unter sich auf dem Sitz zurechtzog: zumindest faßte Bloch das als Erwiderung auf' (AT 13). This compulsory filtering of the outer world through a system of interpretation, where all phenomena and action have meaning, are an 'answer' or an impulse for Bloch's

inner world, this inescapable relating of every instance of reality to the self leads to Bloch's inability to see actions as whole entities. Actions are dissected and the single details are apprehended one after the other as the notion of an overall framework vanishes. This particular perception of reality is most apparent in a scene in a public house when Bloch orders a beer:

Bloch bestellte im Stehen ein Bier. Die Kellnerin hob einen Stuhl vom Tisch. Bloch nahm den zweiten Stuhl vom Tisch und setzte sich. Die Kellnerin ging hinter die Theke. Bloch legte die Hände auf den Tisch. Die Kellnerin bückte sich und öffnete die Flasche. Bloch schob den Aschenbecher weg. Die Kellnerin nahm im Vorbeigehen von einem anderen Tisch einen Bierdeckel. Bloch rückte mit dem Stuhl zurück. Die Kellnerin nahm das Glas von der Flasche, auf die sie es gestülpt hatte, legte den Bierdeckel auf den Tisch, stellte das Glas auf den Deckel, kippte die Flasche in das Glas, stellte die Flasche auf den Tisch und ging weg. (AT 33)

Within this perception each action by the waitress has significance for Bloch and must be reacted to, must be answered or countered by an action on his part, hence the alternating sentences dealing first with the waitress and then with Bloch.

The constant need to react, to interpret, to answer, means that Bloch, as was the case with the two Austrians, builds up expectations of what particular recurrent situations will bring. He reacts to reality according to these models of expectation, sometimes so automatically that momentarily reality does fulfil, in his own consciousness, these expectations, only for its true constitution to then become apparent:

Bloch erwachte von dem Knallen und Schnaufen auf der Straße, mit dem die Abfalltonnen in den Müllwagen gekippt wurden; als er aber hinausschaute, sah er, daß vielmehr die Falttür des Busses, der gerade abfuhr, sich geschlossen hatte, und daß weiter weg

die Milchkannen auf die Laderampe der Molkerei gestellt wurden; hier auf dem Lande gab es keine Müllwagen. (AT 39)

Eine Schulklasse kam vorbei; die Kinder sangen, und Bloch warf die Karten ein. Als sie in den leeren Kasten fielen, hallte es darin. Aber der Briefkasten war so klein, daß es gar nicht hallen konnte. Außerdem war Bloch sofort weitergegangen. (AT 42)

The intensity of Bloch's particular perceptions fluctuates, as Christa Dixon has noted: 'Während Kaspars Integrationsprozeß etwas gradliniger verläuft, verläuft Blochs Desintegrationsprozeß (...) im Hin und Her und Vor und Zurück (...) So funktionieren die körperlichen und sprachlichen Reaktionen gelegentlich wieder normal und wie selbstverständlich.'¹⁷ Just as there were 'key words' in the text for Bloch's perceptions and their subsequent qualification - 'jedenfalls', 'zumindest', 'vielmehr' -, so the words 'selbstverständlich' and 'unvermittelt' become signs for seemingly more positive moments, conveying the notion of directness of experience, experience without the consciousness of the intervention of a system of mediation or interpretation, a language:

Er war so müde, daß er jeden Gegenstand für sich sah, vor allem die Umrisse, als ob es von den Gegenständen nur die Umrisse gebe. Er sah und hörte alles unvermittelt, ohne es erst, wie früher, in Worte übersetzen zu müssen oder es überhaupt nur als Worte und Wortspiele zu erfassen. Er war in einem Zustand, in dem ihm alles natürlich vorkam. (AT 94)

This particular description of Bloch's inner state should cause a few alarm bells to ring in the mind of the reader in spite of Bloch apparently perceiving the world more directly. It is the final sentence in the passage and the use of the word 'natürlich', which reminds us of Handke's essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms', where it was his demand of literature that it should work precisely

against the 'naturalness' of the world and our perception of it, for this was a false 'naturalness'. Bloch's perception of the world as 'natural' is thus akin at this point to Bergner's state of somnambulistic conformism to the dominant 'way of seeing' in Der Ritt über den Bodensee.

Of the other figures in the novel, three stand out in contrast to Bloch - the cinema cashier, who is eventually the murder victim, and the two hairdressers. In his narration of the scenes between Bloch and these people, Handke very often uses the words mentioned above and portrays Bloch's amazement at actions which occur 'naturally': 'Im nachhinein wunderte er sich, daß die Kassierererin die Geste, mit der er das Geld, ohne etwas zu sagen, auf den drehbaren Teller gelegt hatte, mit einer anderen Geste wie selbstverständlich beantwortet hatte' (AT 7). Whereas Bloch's own compulsion to interpret and react to the actions of others is seen in the fact that he regards the cashier's gesture as an 'answer' to his own, his amazement stems from his perception of the gesture as unreflected, 'natural'. Bloch himself is able to act towards others 'naturally' when with the two hairdressers. After an initial period of difficulty in communication, things begin to ease and his particular problems - apprehension of detail, stumbling over words - lessen:

Sie antworteten ihm bereitwillig, und nach und nach nahm Bloch statt der gebleichten Haare mit den dunklen Haarwurzeln, statt der einzelnen Brosche am Hals, statt eines schwarzen Fingernagels, statt des einzelnen Pickels in der ausrasierten Augenbraue, statt des geplatzten Futters am leeren Kaffeehausstuhl wieder Umrisse, Bewegungen, Stimmen, Ausrufe und Gestalten wahr, alles in einem. Mit einer einzigen, ruhigen, schnellen Bewegung fing er auch die Handtasche auf, die plötzlich vom Tisch gekippt war. Das erste Friseur mädchen bot ihm einen Bissen

von ihrem Brot an, und als sie es ihm hinhielt, biß er ganz selbstverständlich hinein. (AT 59-60)

These moments are however short-lived, and, as we shall see, their positive value is by no means assured.

Mostly, Bloch can only obtain relief from the compulsion to interpret in the cinema. This connection is established very early in the novel: 'Alles, was er sah, stürte ihn; er versuchte, möglichst wenig wahrzunehmen. Im Kino drinnen atmete er auf' (AT 7). The reason for the soothing effect the cinema has is undoubtedly connected with the relationship constructed between the film and the spectator. Mixner comments: 'Bloch kommt erst wieder im Kino zur Ruhe, wo er (...) Abbilder von Wirklichkeit beobachten kann, die ihm nicht als Aufforderungen zum Handeln erscheinen, sondern in sich, also selbstverständlich (ohne etwas außerhalb ihrer selbst zu bedeuten), ruhen.'¹⁸ In the cinema Bloch sees a secondary reality - 'Abbilder von Wirklichkeit' - which is fixed in its constitution. As such, Bloch is able to experience it 'directly' without having to interpret it, for, as an image of reality, it carries within it its own interpretation. For Handke the notion of 'aufatmen' is linked with that of 'schauen'. In an early essay he writes of his feelings upon seeing the film Sacramento, a film, 'in dem man aufatmen und schauen konnte'.¹⁹ The notion of 'schauen' is connected with seeing or experiencing directly, 'unvermittelt', without the filtering system of interpretation lodging itself between inner and outer world. In the essay Handke contrasts his own feelings and perceptions of the film with those of the other spectators, who were only able to react 'Dumpf auf Reizwörter'. 'Schauen', then,

is the opposite of 'auslegen', which is a mechanical, automatic process of interpretation, of divining the 'meaning' of perception, as we saw in the case of the aunt in the short story in East Berlin. Bloch enters a state of 'schauen' when standing on a bridge shortly before he discovers the body of the missing schoolboy - the verb is used three times in ten lines of text. The small currents in the water, the insects running over the surface, the movement of the leaves are all seen by Bloch for what they are, he imparts no extra significance to them but experiences them 'directly'. The object, which then begins to disturb the natural setting - the body of the child -, is also initially perceived without a 'meaning' being ascribed to it: 'Eine Zeitlang sah er es, ohne es wahrzunehmen' (AT 62). But then things jolt back into place, although he takes no action as a result of his discovery, fearful, no doubt, that any involvement in the affair could lead to his own arrest.

We saw earlier that Bloch's disturbed relationship to his environment, his compulsion to interpret, manifests itself in the very first paragraph of the book; it is a given fact at the beginning of it, not something which comes into being during its course, but merely gains or loses in intensity. Any true legitimation or explanation of it cannot therefore be sought in the fact that Bloch has committed a murder. The murder is a symptom rather than a cause. It is clearly no coincidence that Bloch murders the cashier immediately after she has asked him whether he is going to work, whereas the reader knows that Bloch thinks he has lost his job. His professions, or rather

his former professions, are clearly important - they are after all both mentioned in the very first sentence of the story. But even before this first sentence there is a reference to his former profession as a goalkeeper in the motto: '"Der Tormann sah zu, wie der Ball über die Linie rollte..." (AT 5). This is an image of failure, an image of the fear of the goalkeeper at the penalty kick. As a goalkeeper in a football game, Bloch is dependent upon those very qualities whose compulsive nature is now causing him so much trouble - anticipation and reaction. He is dependent upon interpreting the movements and feints of the other players correctly, on divining the 'meaning' of a person's action in order to fulfil his own function that much better. The complete action of the football game is directed towards the goalkeeper, he is at the centre of its world, and yet his is the most passive role. He stands between the posts, able to react, but not able to intervene as the other players can. His fear is that even this will not function well enough, that he will not interpret the shooter's intentions and actions correctly, that he cannot rely on a system of coherence to order the world, and yet all the time he is aware that it is the only possibility open to him.

This attitude of the goalkeeper in the game is carried on by Bloch through his life, and is allied with the 'loss' of his job as a fitter, whose task it also is to manufacture coherence out of isolated, separate units. For Bloch there is no coherence at all, but merely a constant stream of isolated and false interpretations. The particular perspective of anticipation, which has become so

compulsive and automatic in Bloch, is also illustrated in various similar images which run throughout the book:

Über einem Feld sah er einen Habicht kreisen. Als der Habicht dann auf der Stelle flatterte und herabstieß, fiel Bloch auf, daß er nicht das Flattern und Herabstoßen des Vogels beobachtet hatte, sondern die Stelle im Feld, auf die der Vogel wohl herabstoßen würde; der Habicht hatte sich im Sturzflug gefangen und war wieder aufgestiegen. (AT 32)

Endlich erblickte er einen Tropfen, der außen am Glas herunterlief (...). Er hatte nicht den herunterlaufenden Tropfen angeschaut, sondern die Stelle auf dem Deckel, auf die der Tropfen wohl treffen könnte. (AT 33)

Er beobachtete auf einem Feld einen Hund, der auf einen Mann zulief; dann bemerkte er, daß er nicht mehr den Hund beobachtete, sondern den Mann, der sich bewegte, wie jemand, der einem anderen in den Weg treten will. (AT 86)

Vor ihm auf der Erde ein anderes Bild: Ameisen, die sich einem Brotbrösel näherten. Er bemerkte, daß er wieder nicht die Ameisen beobachtete, sondern umgekehrt die Fliege, die auf dem Brotkrumen saß. (AT 87)

These images are the equivalents of the goalkeeper's perspective in a football game. Indeed, phrases such as 'treffen', 'fangen' and 'in den Weg treten' serve to emphasise the notions of scoring, saving and tackling. This perspective of anticipation and the search for significance and coherence is a tool Bloch uses in an attempt to order the world. But, just as Kaspar was originally told by the 'Einsager' that language was a tool to be used to bring order into the world, but which ended up between Kaspar and the world, filtering and defining his view and perception of that world according to its own criteria, so Bloch's dependence within the football game on its 'signs', its language, becomes inescapable when he confronts the world. Bloch, as Kaspar, becomes tied to a system of coherence, through which all perception is mediated.

It is this compulsory mediation of perception, which is Handke's real concern, just as it was in our discussion of Kaspar. As such, it is purely the intensity of Bloch's perspective that makes him stand out from the other characters, for it is clear that they too interpret the actions of others, their gestures and facial expressions, that these things take on the role of a language for us, by which we can read and understand others. This becomes particularly clear in the scene where the maid is cleaning Bloch's room.

The text of this scene is punctuated throughout with such phrases as 'es sei ein Mißverständnis', 'das habe er nicht gemeint', 'Verwechslung', 'Das habe er mit der Bemerkung über die Schränke nicht sagen wollen', '"Das wollte ich damit nicht sagen!" rief das Mädchen' (AT 39-40), as Bloch and the maid misinterpret each others' actions, each others' words, each others' signs, each others' language. The important point is that they both rely on codes, on interpretation. The confusion which eventually arises is then amply demonstrated by the final sentences:

Ob sie auf dem Heimweg eine Taschenlampe brauche? fragte Bloch. Sie habe einen Freund, antwortete das Mädchen, das sich mit rotem Gesicht wieder aufrichtete. Ob es in dem Gasthof auch Zimmer mit doppelten Türen gebe? fragte Bloch. "Mein Freund ist ja Tischler", antwortete das Mädchen. Er habe einen Film gesehen, in dem ein Hoteldieb zwischen doppelten Türen eingesperrt worden sei, sagte Bloch. "Aus unseren Zimmern ist noch nie etwas weggekommen!" sagte das Mädchen. (AT 40-41)

The difference between Bloch and the maid is that she lacks these elements of compulsion and intensity so evident in him. But that she also interprets perception, that a directness of experience is as impossible for her as it is for Bloch, is clear. Writing of the other characters

in the story, Nägele and Voris maintain:

Mechanisch interpretieren sie die Wirklichkeit nach einem Code, der wenigstens so fragwürdig ist wie der Blochs, wenn er eine fehlende Begrüßung als Entlassung interpretiert. Der Unterschied ist nur, daß ihr Code ein weit verbreiteter und akzeptierter ist, aber eben dies verleiht ihm auch die implizite Gewalttätigkeit. Das zeigt sich am Beispiel des Zigeuners: da er sich an der Grenze versteckt gehalten hat, 'muß' er also demnach (und weil er ein Zigeuner ist) am Tode des stummen Schülers schuld sein. In Wirklichkeit stellt sich später heraus, daß der Tod des Kindes ein Unfall war. 20

The unreflected nature of their own perceptions relativises the whole notion of 'selbstverständlich' mentioned earlier. They are only 'self evident' or 'natural' because they have been so internalised and conventionalised, but they nevertheless adhere to the same principle of interpretation and search for 'meaning' as Bloch's. A possible 'liberation' from this conventional functioning of experience and perception is then postulated very tentatively by Handke at the end of the book. Such an 'emancipation' from the mediation between inner world and outer world cannot however involve Bloch himself, as the traditional perspective of the goalkeeper is too far established within him. It does however involve another goalkeeper and the central image of the book's title, a penalty kick.

Before the final football match, Bloch meets a customs official who describes the thoughts which go through his head when faced with a smuggler. It transpires that the official is explaining that very same system of anticipation and reaction, with which Bloch now confronts the world, a system of feints and dodges and attempts to interpret the other person's actions. The customs officer comes to a conclusion:

"Eigentlich gibt es keine Regel", sagte der Zollwachbeamte. "Man ist ja immer im Nachteil, weil der andere ebenso beobachtet und sieht, wie man auf ihn reagieren wird. Man kann immer nur reagieren. Und wenn er zu laufen anfängt, wird er schon nach dem ersten Schritt die Richtung ändern, und man hat selber auf dem falschen Fuß gestanden." (AT 102)

Later, when talking to the company representative at the football match, Bloch explains the similar system the goalkeeper uses in his attempt to save a penalty and, no doubt mindful of his own failure suggested by the initial motto of the book, comes to a similar conclusion:

"Der Tormann überlegt, in welche Ecke der andere schießen wird", sagte Bloch. "Wenn er den Schützen kennt, weiß er, welche Ecke er sich in der Regel aussucht. Möglicherweise rechnet aber auch der Elfmeterschütze damit, daß der Tormann sich das überlegt. Also überlegt sich der Tormann weiter, daß der Ball heute einmal in die andere Ecke kommt. Wie aber, wenn der Schütze noch immer mit dem Tormann mitdenkt und nun doch in die übliche Ecke schießen will? Und so weiter, und so weiter." (...) "Ebensogut könnte der Tormann versuchen, mit einem Strohhalm eine Tür aufzusperren." (AT 112)

But when the penalty is taken, the goalkeeper remains motionless and the penalty taker shoots the ball into his arms. The penalty is saved, and the goalkeeper is no longer a failure, his fear has disappeared.

It would seem that the goalkeeper rejects the interpretation of signs, feints and dodges, which has become a perspective on life for Bloch. He rejects the memory of former penalty kicks, he rejects his previous experience, he rejects the traditional, 'natural' behaviour on such occasions, indeed he rejects his own historical dimension, and 'magically' saves the kick. Freed from this mediating system between inner and outer world, this goalkeeper reverses the motto of the book. Clearly, in practical terms, this is not a course of action to be recommended to goalkeepers. Rather it functions, as, at Handke's

admission in his reply to Marianne Kesting mentioned earlier, do Bloch's professions as *fitter* and goalkeeper, as a metaphor for a 'direct' (yet ahistorical) relationship to the world. It is a metaphor for an attempt to avoid the normative perception patterns, which have led to a stagnation and mechanical functioning of that perception. But to avoid them by simply rejecting them - the goalkeeper does not even attempt to move - is to transcend rather than confront and change these patterns of experience, perception and living. In Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied there is an attempt to contextualise and thereby understand such patterns, but even there any change takes place within myth rather than reality.

iii) Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied

The first person narrator in Handke's Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied suffers from disturbances of perception, feelings of alienation and isolation similar to those of Bloch. These are placed within a framework of a possible detective story, in that we learn that his marriage to Judith has finally collapsed after a period of enmity, during which the specific qualities of married couples, 'Vertraulichkeiten (...) necken (...) Geheimsprache (...) (die) nur uns selber verständlichen Anzüglichkeiten'²¹, had been eroded. Their relationship had degenerated to a 'wollüstig süße Entfremdung, in der ich im Haß Judith als Ding, in der Entkrampfung dann als Wesen bezeichnete' (KB 130). Sex was replaced by masturbation as the ability of the self to adjust to the other's existence decreased.

This was not only limited to Judith but spread to cover all women: 'Ich träumte nicht einmal mehr davon, mit einer Frau zusammenzusein. Auch beim Onanieren war ich nicht fähig, mir dabei eine Frau vorzustellen' (KB 131). This strand of the novel, where the narrator is both searching for and fleeing from Judith and thereby being exposed to her attempts, some serious, others not, to kill him, provides a constant atmosphere of threat and unease connected with the past, which spurs the narrator on to an evaluation of it, and from thence to a new future. Anxiety and unease are present in the narrator's past not only in connection with Judith, however. Such anxieties have been a regular feature of his life: 'So weit ich mich zurückerinnern kann, bin ich wie geboren für Entsetzen und Erschrecken gewesen' (KB 9). These 'Angstmomente' are deeply rooted in his childhood in Austria.

The images of this childhood are intimately connected with violence, war, isolation and paucity of experience:

Holzschelte lagen weit verstreut, still von der Sonne beschienen, draußen im Hof, nachdem ich vor den amerikanischen Bombern ins Haus getragen worden war. Blutstropfen leuchteten an den seitlichen Haustorstufen, wo an den Wochenenden die Hasen geschlachtet wurden. In einer Dämmerung, um so fürchterlicher, als sie noch immer nicht Nacht war, stolperte ich mit lächerlich baumelnden Armen den schon in sich zusammengesunkenen Wald entlang, aus dem nur die Flechten an den vordersten Baumstämmen noch herauschimmerten, rief ab und zu etwas, indem ich stehenblieb, kläglich leise vor Scham, und brüllte schließlich aus der tiefsten Seele, als ich mich vor Entsetzen schon nicht mehr schämen konnte, in den Wald hinein nach jemandem, den ich liebte und der am Morgen in den Wald gegangen und noch nicht herausgekommen war, und wieder lagen weit verstreut im Hof, auch an den Hausmauern haftend, im Sonnenschein die flaumigen Federn geflüchteter Hühner herum. (KB 9-10)

Ich hatte nie etwas, womit ich das, was ich täglich sah, vergleichen konnte. Alle Eindrücke waren Wiederholungen schon bekannter Eindrücke. Damit meine

ich nicht nur, daß ich wenig herumkam, sondern daß ich auch wenig Leute sah, die unter anderen Bedingungen lebten als ich. Da wir arm waren, erlebte ich fast nur Leute, die auch arm waren. Da wir so wenig Dinge sahen, gab es nicht viel zu reden, und so redeten wir fast jeden Tag das gleiche. (KB 75)

The narrow horizon and the unchanging conditions of this childhood outer world, to reappear in Handke's description of his mother's existence in Wunschloses Unglück, determine the constitution of the narrator's inner world. He analyses a split during his childhood between his dreams and his surroundings. His dreams were never possible in his environment, and, because of this divorce of phantasy and physical existence, because of the lack of a point of correlation or comparison between the two, only his 'Angst-momente' stand out clearly, when, for one short moment, both were united. Anxiety is thus connected with the concrete situation of the narrator's place within the environment; the outer world, the narrator's reality with all its attendant forces and coercions, is shown to mould and prescribe the limits of the child's inner world, his consciousness. Here Handke constructs and provides a historical perspective to the narrator's anxieties, which was lacking in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter. States of anxiety are linked to particular kinds of perception, and these in turn are linked to the environment. At first reading this may appear similar to Bloch's state of mind:

Angstzustände waren deswegen für mich immer Erkenntnisvorgänge, und nur wenn ich Angst hatte, achtete ich auf die Umgebung, ob sie mir etwa ein Zeichen zum Besseren oder noch Schlechteren gäbe (...) Wenn ich damals Hoffnungsmomente hatte, so habe ich sie alle vergessen. (KB 76)

But the disruption in the narrator's relationship to

his environment, to physical nature, is contextualised also within the terms of the existing property relations: nature becomes a field, which belongs to someone else and in which you have to work. Hence, the rural setting the child grew up in is presented as a place of oppression, with little opportunity for nature to assume a more 'traditional' role of a place to escape to and fortify oneself in. The child lives, as Durzak has pointed out, in a state of 'Abspaltung von einer sinntragenden Wirklichkeit'²²:

Ich war auf dem Land aufgewachsen und konnte schwer verstehen, wie einen die Natur von etwas befreien sollte; mich hatte sie nur bedrückt, oder es war mir in ihr wenigstens unbehaglich gewesen. Stoppelfelder, Obstbäume und Weideflächen waren mir unangenehm und hatten etwas Abschreckendes. (KB 50)

This unpleasantness of nature is not primarily an unpleasantness stemming from the phenomena themselves, although the narrator does report this aspect as well, but one which stems from the fact that he cannot move freely or feel 'at home' because the trees, fields etc. belong to someone else, and any idea of escape in nature only makes sense as a means of avoiding work:

Die Obstbäume gehörten anderen, vor denen man über die Felder davonlaufen mußte, und indem man auf das Vieh aufpaßte, bekam man als Lohn dafür gerade nur die Gummistiefel, die man ohnedies nur brauchte, um auf das Vieh aufzupassen. Weil das Kind sofort in die Natur gezwungen wurde, um darin zu arbeiten, entwickelte es auch nie einen Blick dafür, höchstens einen bloß kuriosen auf Felsspalten, hohle Bäume und Erdlöcher, in denen man verschwinden konnte, überhaupt auf alle Arten von unterirdischen Höhlen. Auch Unterholz zog mich an, Maisfelder, dichtes Haselnußgebüsch, Hohlwege und Bachschluchten. Häuser und Straßen waren mir lieber als die Natur, hier konnte ich viel weniger Verbotenes tun. (KB 51)

The child's sense of nature and its signs is thus intimately connected with the dominant social relations in Austria at the time. This concretisation of the narrator's anxiety

is in contrast to the 'goalkeeper perspective' of Bloch, which functions as a metaphor for his displacement, but which is ultimately inadequate to explain it.

There are admittedly similarities between Bloch and the narrator. They are both estranged from their wives; they both have difficulty in communicating with others, particularly on the telephone; they both have feelings of alienation and unease in hotel rooms. The 'Versprachlichung der Dinge', the presence of meaning, of significance in all objects and gestures led to Bloch's strained relationship with his environment. The 'language' of the narrator's childhood, the signs and meanings inextricably linked and associated with Austrian phenomena, albeit with the added contextualisation of this perspective referred to above, the appearance of his former world as a semiotic accumulation of unease and terror haunts the narrator during his journey through America. But the radical difference between this novel and the earlier one is that the narrator is aware of his particular perspective, and is able and willing to place his specific perceptions within the framework of a personal history, based upon an understanding of the formation of consciousness (inner world) within the context of the dominant social relations (outer world). This self-knowledge is totally lacking in Bloch. This difference leads to the new dimension in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied: the readiness to reflect upon the mode of perception and the willingness to change, the attempt to find a solution, to form a future within the context of an understanding of the past. The tentative proposal of Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, that the goalkeeper can reject the

mediation of interpretative codes in favour of a 'direct' relationship to reality and thereby save the kick, is abandoned in favour of an attempt to bring about change in the normative, socialised, automatic ways of seeing. Mediation is accepted, but any particular system of coherence presenting itself as 'natural' is resisted. Change for the future is based upon a re-evaluation of the past, which is itself aided by a new function for memory, and by the journey through America. There is a clash between the socialised inner world of the narrator, with its assimilation of the signs of Austria, and the exotic, 'strange' outer world of America. The tension and friction between the two produce a new understanding of the narrator's Austrian environment, a new acceptance of his own identity and the possibilities within him, and a peaceful end to his relationship with his wife. The disappointment with Handke's novel is that these intentions are only ever stated, they are not portrayed in their fulfilment.

The narrator's will to change is amply documented throughout the novel, and such instances also involve the main catalysts in such a change. For the narrator, the journey within America, America itself, the books he reads, his memories of Austria within this new environment and his conversations with and observations of Americans all become constituent elements of the intention. The narrator has eager expectations of his presence in a new, strange country: '"Jetzt bin ich den zweiten Tag in Amerika", sagte ich (...) "Ich mich schon verändert habe?"' (KB 17-18). The narrator's reading material - Keller's Der Grüne Heinrich and Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby -

functions for him as a possibility of comparison. This was an element which was noticeably lacking in his Austrian environment: 'Ich hatte nie etwas, womit ich das, was ich täglich sah, vergleichen konnte' (KB 75). His reading enables him to create a distance from himself, into which reflection can enter, and with reflection a re-evaluation and a confidence in a new identity: 'Es würde mir gelingen, vieles anders zu machen. Ich würde nicht wiederzuerkennen sein!' (KB 19-20). This is accompanied by a longing for development, a wish to grow older (KB 69), and the emphasis on such change being a matter of honesty and integrity towards the self, and not merely a type of conformism, an imitation of others: 'Ich wollte nicht werden wie sie, sondern wie es mir möglich war' (KB 135). These elements support the strength of the narrator's early assertion that 'das Bedürfnis, anders zu werden als ich war, (...) plötzlich leibhaftig (wurde), wie ein Trieb' (KB 18).

Formally, Handke includes in his novel elements of the 'Bildungsroman' - the experience of nature, the theatre, the conversations, the journeying and the development of the main figure 'out of inwardness into social activity, out of subjectivity into objectivity'.²³ Indeed, according to Pascal's criteria and definition, the lack of portrayal of the narrator's new-found sense of self is itself another element of the genre:

The "Bildungsroman" is peculiarly German too, in that it deals essentially only with the weaning of the heroes from their inwardness, with their spiritual preparation for social life, and stops or falters when they actually enter upon it. ²³

Jürgen Jacobs comes to similar conclusions about the constituents of the genre:

Sein Thema ist die Auseinandersetzung einer zentralen Figur mit verschiedenen Weltbereichen. Das beherrschende Erzählinteresse richtet sich dabei auf den Wandlungsprozeß des Helden, der ihn durch Aneignung konkreter Erfahrung zur Klarheit über sich selbst und über die Welt führt. Zur Verdeutlichung dieses Vorganges sind in den Gang der Bildungsgeschichte häufig (...) Reflexionen, Rückwendungen und Resümees eingeschoben. Das entscheidende Kriterium, das den Bildungsroman von anderen Formen des Entwicklungsromans abhebt, ist seine Tendenz zum ausgleichenden Schluß: Der Bruch zwischen idealerfüllter Seele und widerständiger Realität, der dem Helden zum existentiellen Problem wird, soll am Ende überwunden werden. 24

But, this is not to say, of course, that Handke has attempted in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied to reproduce a genre belonging to the nineteenth century. Jacobs sees the concept of the 'Bildungsroman' as being intimately connected with and tied to the 'optimistic mentality of the rising bourgeoisie': 'Die Welt erscheint ihm (dem Bürgertum) als das Objekt handelnder Besitzergreifung und als Medium aktiver Selbstverwirklichung.'²⁵ Theo Elm also sees the claim by some critics that Handke has written a '"Bildungsroman" of the old school' as ridiculous:

Träfen diese Thesen zu, dann wäre Handke freilich unter die Erkenntnisstufe zurückgefallen, die die moderne Literatur durch Thomas Mann im Zauberberg erreicht hat. Dort wird eindrucksvoll dargelegt, weshalb diese Gattung dem 20. Jahrhundert nicht mehr gerecht werden kann. Deshalb nämlich, weil sich die "Bildungswerte" vor der industriellen Arbeitswelt und den technischen Nützlichkeitsansprüchen in künstliche, dünnluftige Räume zurückziehen mußten. 26

Rather, the novel is, as Handke himself has said, 'die Fiktion eines Entwicklungsromans' with a main figure who is undeniably from the twentieth century, to judge from the type of alienation from nature and other people he experiences. The constituent elements of the traditional model are employed by Handke quite consciously as a means of creating distance, to produce a comparison between traditional methods of the representation of self-development in

literature, and the kind of development which is possible in the twentieth century, development which is, according to Handke, by no means assured:

In meinem Buch versuche ich, eine Hoffnung zu beschreiben - daß man sich so nach und nach entwickeln könnte. Daß wenigstens auf einer unabhängigen Reise - und der Held ist ja auch, wenigstens für die Reise, durch genügend ökonomische Mittel unabhängig - die Vorstellungen eines Entwicklungromans aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert möglich wären. 27

Part of this 'fiction' is the picture of America itself. At the time of the novel's publication Handke was criticised for not showing the 'real' America, the America of the ghettos and the Vietnam war.²⁸ But the function of America in the novel places any possible description of it outside the boundaries of such a finely documented critique as, for example, Lettau's Täglicher Faschismus. Rather, America is

nur ein Vorwand, der Versuch, eine distanzierte Welt zu finden (...) die Fremde (...) die andere Welt. Für mich ist es halt eine Traumwelt, in der man sich selber ganz neu entdecken muß, in der man selbst ganz neu anfangen muß. 29

This undifferentiated picture of America functions as the potential for change, in much the same way as East Berlin in Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bäuerlichen Kegelbahn, the embodiment of the possibility of a different future. Claire, the narrator's companion, remarks at one point: 'Du bist hierhergekommen wie mit einer Zeitmaschine, nicht um den Ort zu wechseln, sondern um in die Zukunft zu fahren' (KB 86). The real place America is not important to the narrator; if it were, he would surely recognise much that is familiar, owing to the increasing 'Americanisation' of Europe. What are important are the different signs and signals connected with the environment, signs and signals

which distance him from Austria and from his old identity.

This distance allows the narrator to compare and learn:

Erst die Konfrontation mit zeichenhafter Wirklichkeit, die eine Herausforderung bedeutet, führt zu einer Selbstreflexion des von einer anderen, zeichenhaft erlebten Wirklichkeit geprägten Bewußtseins, ermöglicht eine Form von Bewußtseinsänderung. 30

This function for America of providing the conditions for change is itself in keeping with the tradition of the 'Bildungsroman':

Ganz in der Tradition des Wilhelm Meister oder des Nachsummers ist Amerika als Reiseland das Überall und Nirgendwo, dessen Charakteristika sich dem geistig-seelischen Entwicklungsprozeß des 'Bildungsreisenden' unterordnen müssen, dessen stilisierte Spezifika nur den einen Zweck haben: den Erzähler zur Auseinandersetzung mit sich selbst zu provozieren. 31

There are however qualities attributed to America, which the narrator does not just use in relation to his own European consciousness in the way Elm describes here. These qualities of the suppression of individualism in favour of the community allied to respect for each person's individuality are presented, particularly in the final scene with John Ford, as worthy of adoption and integration into the narrator's inner world, both as an immediate solution to his marriage problems and as a longer-term programme for his future life. But, as we shall see in our discussion of this final scene, the setting within an almost mythical landscape and the clear contradictions between the way Ford is portrayed by Handke and the evidence of his life and work relativise the validity of this attempt to change.

In the process of the re-evaluation of the patterns of his inner world, the narrator reads two books, one from America and one from Europe. Through confrontation with them, sometimes involving acceptance, sometimes rejection, but using them as a foil, as a source of comparison for his

own consciousness, he attempts to attain a new openness to the world, which was previously restricted by the boundaries of his perception patterns. From The Great Gatsby he learns 'Gefühle von Herzlichkeit, Aufmerksamkeit, von Heiterkeit und Glück, und ich spürte, daß sie mir meine Anlage zu Schrecken und Panik für immer austreiben mußten' (KB 18). Openness of emotion contrasts with the crippling feelings of hate and disgust for Judith. Openness to the world and openness of the world to the narrator is aided by the reading of Der Grüne Heinrich:

So empfinde ich bei seiner Geschichte das Vergnügen an den Vorstellungen einer anderen Zeit, in der man noch glaubte, daß aus einem nach und nach ein anderer werden müsse und daß jedem einzelnen die Welt offenstehe. Im Übrigen kommt es mir seit ein paar Tagen vor, daß mir die Welt wirklich offensteht und daß ich mit jedem Blick etwas Neues erlebe. (KB 142)

This escape from 'einem zu einem Regelsystem erstarrten Erfahrungsmechanismus'³² is the 'moment of true feeling' in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. But such openness takes place only within the inner world. Handke seems to construct a dialectical relationship between the outer world of America and the inner world of the narrator, but this relationship is a different one to that described in Austria. There, the particular set of social relations and the narrator's consciousness of his environment and the people in it mutually influenced each other. In America, such considerations no longer seem to be valid as the country has the function of only offering what the narrator wants to see. Hence, when Claire says quite rightly of the narrator that 'du verhältst dich, als ob die Welt eine Beschwerung sei, eigens für dich' (KB 97), she pinpoints the lack of concreteness behind the insights thus won. The narrator

may think that the world is open to him, but in concrete terms it clearly is not. Indeed, he can only think it is open to him, because he has not confronted the way the world is. This is evident, for example, in an incident early on in the novel. The narrator is standing on a street watching two girls in a telephone booth. Gradually, so the narrator asserts, the sight of them changes in his consciousness - he can be no more exact in his description of this moment than to use the phrase 'dann belebte mich ihr Anblick und gab mir einen Ruck' (KB 35), a description of the jolt out of perception patterns which Handke is also to use in the later novel Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. Now, suddenly, the narrator's perception of the girls is different, more 'direct', as a result of which he describes himself in a state of paradise:

Es war ein Anblick, der mich befreite und unbeschwert machte. Erleichtert schaute ich, in einem paradiesischen Zustand, in dem man nur sehen wollte und in dem einem das Sehen schon ein Erkennen war. (KB 36)

Such moments, as in the later novel, are inexplicable, uncontrollable, mystical and irrational. As such they transcend the concrete conditions behind various perception patterns, which Handke had analysed with reference to the nature of his childhood earlier in the novel, rather than liberate the narrator from them.

The narrator's experience and perception of nature in America contrasts with that in Austria. In America there is no consciousness of oppression or isolation, but rather of a curious harmony and intermixing of technology and natural phenomena:

Die Straßenbeleuchtung war schon eingeschaltet, und der Himmel erschien sehr blau. Das Gras unter den Bäumen strahlte von einem Abglanz der untergegangenen

Sonne. In den Büschen in den Vorgärten rieselten die Blüten zu Boden. In einer anderen Straße fiel die Tür eines großen amerikanischen Wagens zu. (KB 19)

This is the nature of the twentieth century, of grass beside a street lamp. Within a consciousness able to experience in this way, New York becomes a 'sanftes Naturschauspiel':

Alles, was ich vorher nur ganz nah sehen konnte, Glasflächen, Stopschilder, Fahnenstangen, Leuchtschriften, rückte nun, gerade weil ich stundenlang nichts weiter weg hatte anschauen können, zu einer Landschaft auseinander, in der man sah, so weit das Auge reichte. (KB 47)

What were formerly perceived by the narrator as unconnected details are now united, given order, become a 'landscape'. A state of harmony arises between the consciousness of the narrator and the outer world of signs present in the 'landscape' of the modern city. This 'landscape' attracts the narrator - 'Ich bekam Lust, mich hineinzulegen, und darin ein Buch zu lesen' (KB 47) - and he later realises that Austria is a country with the same signs, but that as a child he was unable to perceive them and had, in any case, no control over what he perceived:

"Ich habe bemerkt, daß ich vorher schon so weit war zu glauben, es gäbe dort nicht die üblichen Zeichensysteme. Und doch sah ich, ohne Spaß, die gleichen Verkehrsschilder, die gleichen Flaschenformen, die gleichen Schraubengewinde wie anderswo. Ich war ernstlich verwundert, daß es Gaststätten, Warenhäuser, Asphaltstraßen gab. Alles stand frei zur Verfügung. (...) Sogar die Natur, die mich immer nervös und mit mir unzufrieden machte, schaue ich allmählich mit anderen Augen an." (KB 70)

What becomes clear here is that it was rather Austria which was the 'foreign' country, the 'strange' land, distorted by the narrator's perception. America has provided the distance and possibility of comparison for the narrator to use to re-evaluate his homeland and to 'return home'.

He comes to the realisation that

Österreich doch nicht nur ein so verworrenes, sprachloses, unsympathisches Kindheitsland war, sondern daß es da die gleichen Ordnungssysteme gab, die ihm nur in einem allgemeinen Kuddelmuddel ertrunken schien. 33

To dismiss the narrator's perception of Austria as a 'hotch-potch' or a 'muddle' is, considering the presentation of it early in the novel, an injustice. But, in any case, the realisations of the narrator are taking place on a different level. In talking about the similarities he has noticed between America and Austria, the narrator mentions only the phenomena of the city - stop signs, neon lights - or those of the consumer world - restaurants, department stores. He does not go into the concrete social conditions behind these phenomena, and yet they relieve him of anxiety and alienation, which were caused by his disadvantaged position as a child within a concrete set of social relations. The narrator would seem to confuse feeling comfortable in the consumer world with feeling comfortable in reality - or, rather, he grabs at the comfort offered by the consumer world and thereby avoids the real reasons for his former discomfort. The consumer world functions, as indeed it is intended to do, as a palliative for the unjust economic relations, upon which it is founded; 'Handkes "Sensibilität" (...) bezieht sich immer nur auf Konsum-Vorgänge, nicht aber auf die dahinterliegenden Produktions-Vorgänge (...)' (Handke) fällt auf den schönen Schein dieser zweiten Natur, auf die "phantasmagorische Scheinwelt der Ware" (Marx), herein.³⁴

Armed, however, with this new 'comfort', the narrator turns towards a re-evaluation of his childhood and life

in Austria. No longer does he wish to escape from himself; instead, he accepts himself and proposes to integrate himself into a social order, abandoning his isolation:

Ich wußte, daß ich mich von all diesen Beschränk-
heiten nie mehr loswünschen würde, und daß es von
jetzt an nur darauf ankam, für sie alle eine Anordnung
und eine Lebensart zu finden, die mir gerecht wäre,
und in der auch andere Leute mir gerecht werden
könnten. (KB 102)

It is this search for a just order and way of living which occupies the terrain of the greater part of the novel. The 'long farewell' is therefore not only from Judith, but also from the narrator's former sense of self.

As he journeys through America, certain at first seemingly positive pointers towards the possible form of this new way of living are registered. These experiences, which postulate a 'direct', almost mystical relationship between self and world, connect with the concerns of Der Ritt über den Bodensee and Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter. They are however rejected in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied as leading into an 'empty' world, without social form. The first of these experiences takes place in a bar where the narrator is playing dice. He experiences the split-second appearance of the number he was aiming for before the die rolls on: 'Dieses kurze Aufleuchten der richtigen Zahl aber war so stark gewesen, daß ich es empfand, als ob die Zahl auch wirklich gekommen wäre, aber nicht jetzt, sondern ZU EINER ANDEREN ZEIT' (KB 25). This momentary coincidence of expectation and reality represents however a jump out of the narrator's existence as an historical figure. Although, at the time, its function was to awaken in the narrator the knowledge that there were other possibilities in his life, - he says triumphantly,

'Mein Leben bis jetzt, das durfte noch nicht alles sein!'

(KB 25) -, he realises later, and to a certain extent at the time of experiencing it, that this 'other time' is a flight from reality, divorced from the continuum of past, present and future, in which he lives. It is a yearning for a 'naive', 'innocent' state of experience as a counter to the automatic functioning of perception in his own consciousness:

Diese andere Zeit bedeutete nicht etwa die Zukunft oder die Vergangenheit, sie war ihrem Wesen nach eine ANDERE Zeit als die, in der ich sonst lebte und in der ich vor und zurück dachte. Es war ein durchdringendes Gefühl von einer ANDEREN Zeit, in der es auch andere Orte geben mußte als in meinem jetzigen Bewußtsein, in der auch die Gefühle etwas anderes waren als jetzt die Gefühle und man selbst im Augenblick gerade erst in dem Zustand, in dem vielleicht die unbelebte Erde damals war, als nach jahrtausendelangem Regen zum ersten Mal ein Wassertropfen fiel, ohne sofort wieder zu verdampfen. (KB 25)

A similar mystical experience of the dissolution of the historical dimension of the self occurs later in the novel when the narrator is watching a cypress tree. With increasing observation, the narrator and the tree become one:

Auf einem kleinen Hügel stand in einiger Entfernung eine Zypresse. Ihre Zweige sahen in der Dämmerung noch fast kahl aus. Sie schwankte leicht hin und her, in einer Bewegung, die dem eigenen Atem glich. Ich vergaß sie wieder, aber während ich dann auch mich selber vergaß und nur noch hinausstarre, rückte die Zypresse sanft schwankend mit jedem Atemzug näher und drang mir schließlich bis in die Brust hinein. Ich stand regungslos, die Ader im Kopf hörte auf zu schlagen, das Herz setzte aus. Ich atmete nicht mehr, die Haut starb ab, und mit einem willenlosen Wohlgefühl spürte ich, wie die Bewegung der Zypresse die Funktion des Atemzentrums übernahm, mich in sich mitschwanken ließ, sich von mir befreite, wie ich aufhörte, ein Widerstand zu sein, und endlich als Überzähliger aus ihrem sanften Spiel ausschied. (KB 95)

Although the experience calms the narrator, so that he feels 'schwach und angenehm faul', here again the experience represents an escape rather than a confrontation and coming

to terms with his self. Both mystical experiences are evaluated and rejected shortly later. They are seen as worlds which are 'notwendig aufgelöst und leer, ohne eigene Lebensform' (KB 101); they may offer only 'ein allgemeines paradiesisches Lebensgefühl, ohne Verkrampfung und Angst, in dem ich selber (...) gar nicht mehr vorkam'. The narrator dreads this 'empty world' so much, however, that he becomes proud of 'meine oft kindischen Ängste (...) meine jähen Begriffstutzigkeiten' (KB 101) and moves to accept his own identity, searching instead for a way of living to encompass it:

Seine neugewonnene Pragmatik gipfelt in der Erkenntnis der Notwendigkeit, sich selbst, wie er ist, als Realität anzuerkennen und annehmen zu müssen. Sein Problem wird in der Folgezeit darin bestehen, zwischen der Realität seiner selbst und der Welt ein vermittelndes Arrangement zu finden. 35

Beginnings of this 'mediating arrangement' are to be found in some of the narrator's attitudes throughout the book. A respect for the individuality of others, not just of himself, manifests itself in his disgust at 'Begriffe, Definitionen und Abstraktionen' (KB 22), at any attempt to generalise or turn an individual into a representative or type. The narrator sees a student with short hair and in Bermuda shorts,

und ich blickte ihn entsetzt an, fassungslos bei dem Gedanken, daß jemals jemand es trotzdem wagen könnte, etwas Allgemeines über diese einzelne Figur zu sagen, daß jemand ihn typisieren und zu einem Vertreter von etwas anderem machen würde. (KB 22)

As a playwright, for the narrator is an author by profession, he expects difficulties from this new respect in relation to the writing of characters, for to attempt to describe or characterise a figure is to devalue it and to prescribe its limits, so that it becomes merely a 'concept': 'Wenn

ich Leute auf der Bühne reden lasse, schnappen sie mir schon nach den ersten Sätzen zu und sind für immer auf einen Begriff gebracht' (KB 150). Connected with this new sense of the dignity of the individual is a sense of communion, a sense of 'Sympathie' with no wish to dominate or impose any outside will. Such is the intensity of this feeling that the narrator can claim: 'Es gab niemanden, mit dem ich mich nicht sogleich verwandt fühlte' (KB 41). This sympathy, an emotion of equality and mutual respect rather than one of dominance and subjugation, becomes the goal for him in the realm of human relationships. It is an affirmation of a common humanity transcending the more narrow boundaries of personal feeling:

Es mußte eine Beziehung zu jemand anderem geben, die nicht nur persönlich, zufällig und einmalig war, in der man nicht durch eine immer wieder expreßte und erlogene Liebe zueinandergehörte, sondern durch einen notwendigen, unpersönlichen Zusammenhang. (KB 165)

A new lust for life makes itself known as the narrator slowly turns away from his obsessive and constant registration of his self:

In diesen Tagen spürte ich auch zum ersten Mal eine länger andauernde, nicht nur fiebrige Lebenslust. Ich saß da, wir aßen und tranken, und ich war mit mir einverstanden. (KB 122)

Ich redete nicht mehr mit mir selber, freute mich auf den Tag, wie früher auf die Nacht; Fingernägel und Haare wuchsen mir schneller. (KB 124)

With this comes an acceptance of the world, manifest in a turning away from the cinema. In Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter the cinema had been a place of refuge for Bloch, a place where he could 'breathe a sigh of relief', for in the film reality and personal identity were fixed through the rigidity of the images and the roles played, and thus they presented no problems for Bloch's perception. But these

identities were nevertheless roles, artificial and conceptualised, similar to the roles the narrator writes in his own plays. Hence, the narrator, in his attempt to find a new order in his life, leaves the cinema behind: 'Ich sehnte mich meist aus den Kinos heraus und atmete draußen auf' (KB 134). The only exception to this is John Ford's film Young Mr. Lincoln, which enables the narrator to partake of a vision of his own future, whereas the other films only limited his vision. The roles presented in them are examples of automatic living, in which the inner world is strapped into the straitjacket of expectation. Such living according to a pre-ordained formula is something Handke is to investigate more fully in relation to his mother in Wunschloses Unglück. The narrator also feels bound by expectations of his own behaviour, so that he feels he only exists in others' perception when he 'performs' his role: '"Muß ich mich denn immer noch darstellen, damit man mich wahrnimmt?"' (KB 56). The break out of this tradition of behaviour involves a confrontation with the past, which itself ascribes a central function to memory.

Memory for the narrator is not a nostalgic return to some golden past, but rather active: '"Indem ich die Erinnerung betätige, will ich aber nicht die Erlebnisse als ganze wiederholen, sondern möchte nur die ersten kleinen Hoffnungen, die ich dabei spürte, nicht wieder zu Schwärmereien verkümmern lassen' (KB 77). This is a positive undertaking, establishing a forward-looking, progressive relationship from past to present and on to the future. Memory plays an important, active, mediating part within the narrator's continually developing understanding of the

historical dimension of his self, indeed memory itself is part of that dimension. This is in sharp contrast to the 'Liebespaar' he and Claire meet. For them memory is a sentimental obfuscation of a past reality, an area to dwell in rather than to use for the present and the future. This is particularly clear in the scene where they play old records. They sink more and more into nostalgia, until the narrator remarks: 'Ich sagte, daß mir in der Erinnerung das, was ich einmal erlebt hätte, nicht verklärt würde, sondern erst richtig zustieße' (KB 141). Nostalgia dulls the perception of the past, the narrator's active memory works against the stagnation of his own history and therefore against the stagnation of his future potential. This was also a point Handke made in an interview in 1973, when discussing his future work: 'Für den Schreibvorgang ist die Erinnerung tatsächlich immer wichtiger, sie ist konstituierend geworden. Die Fähigkeit zu erinnern auszubilden, das wird überhaupt meine Arbeit für die Zukunft sein.'³⁶ Memory has the same function for Handke within the framework of the future as it has for the narrator: 'Ich (will) die Erinnerung nur auf die Zukunft angewendet wissen, als Lebensform für die Zukunft.'

Yet these possibilities of a different future remain only stated or asserted in the novel, they are never portrayed in their fulfilment. The narrator is confronted with his childhood again when he goes to visit his brother, who is working as a lumberjack. He never actually makes contact with him, but merely wanders through his shack, noting the fact that Gregor still has the calendar of the local grocery store in Austria sent to him every year.

These calendars were, for the narrator, signs of the paucity of experience during his childhood: 'Als Kinder hatten wir so wenig erlebt, und es gab so wenig zu sehen, daß wir uns jedesmal sogar auf das Foto am neuen Kalender freuten' (KB 176). This experience of his brother 'in seiner naiven Verbundenheit mit der Kindheit' (KB 2) is expanded later by observing him at work where he shows a similar lack of consciousness about his bodily functions. The narrator watches him defecate in the snow, where Gregor shows a child-like obliviousness to the possible shame in such an action. For the narrator, Gregor's intact relationship to his childhood, manifest in the calendar and in his actions, is too much to bear, and he runs back to the safety of the motel. He cannot use the experience in relation to his own attitude to his life as a child in Austria.

Similarly, the eventual dissolution of his relationship with Judith says nothing about what he may have learned, other than that their marriage had become trapped 'in den beliebig verfügbaren Posen der Entfremdung' (KB 184). The final escape from a relationship, which had degenerated to the playing out of a number of roles, is itself presented by Handke in a parody of a Western shoot-out, which undermines its seriousness. The narrator is summoned by postcard to a road above the sea, and Judith approaches him with a gun in her hand: it is sundown. However, the narrator manages to disarm her and throws the gun into the sea. Not a word is spoken between the two, and eventually they climb aboard a bus 'heading south' and travel to see John Ford. The details of the resolution of this relation-

ship are never imparted to the reader - it is reported later that they are told to John Ford, but again the reader learns nothing of them. The entire episode is, after the quite real descriptions earlier in the novel of the narrator's isolation and alienation from Judith, disappointing in its lack of concreteness. Handke himself recognised this in an interview, when asked about their decision to part peacefully: 'Dabei handelt es sich um eine Sehnsucht von mir, um einen, wenn Sie so wollen, märchenhaften Schluß. Daß es nämlich möglich sei, friedlich auseinanderzugehen, nachdem man sich schon so lange und so schmerzhaft vermischt hat.'³⁷ Seen thus, this episode is a fulfilment of the hope expressed in the motto to the second part of the novel, a quotation from Anton Reiser: '"Ist es also wohl zu verwundern, wenn die Veränderung des Orts oft so vieles beiträgt, uns dasjenige, was wir uns nicht gern als wirklich denken, wie einen Traum vergessen zu machen?"' (KB 107). This passage from Mcrititz' novel exemplifies the attitude towards reality in the final part of Handke's novel. Reality is transcended, it is forgotten 'as if it were a dream', and the novel moves into the world of the fairy-tale or the myth.

This mythical quality is most evident in the final section of the novel, the conversation with Ford. The hard won intentions of the narrator are mystified in the idyllic setting of Ford's home in Bel Air. Ford represents many attitudes which are sited in direct contrast to the 'formlosen europäischen Individualismus'³⁷ of the narrator, attitudes which have also been asserted by the latter through the novel's course. Ford maintains that the

'American way' is a rejection of subjectivity in favour of a sense of community. Judith asks him why he always says 'we' instead of 'I':

"Wir Amerikaner sagen 'wir', auch wenn wir von unseren Privatsachen reden", antwortete John Ford. "Das kommt vielleicht daher, daß für uns alles, was wir tun, Teil einer gemeinsamen öffentlichen Aktion ist. Ich-Geschichten gibt es nur dort, wo einer für alle anderen steht. Wir gehen mit unserem Ich nicht so feierlich um wie ihr." (KB 188)

Handke portrays Ford in addition as showing concern for others in their individuality, and placing people at the centre of his thoughts:

Oft, wenn er nach etwas Allgemeinem gefragt wurde, machte er Gedankensprünge und erzählte von Einzelheiten, vor allem von einzelnen Menschen. Bei Fragen nach Amerika fielen ihm immer wieder Leute ein, mit denen er zu tun gehabt hatte. Er beurteilte sie nie, gab nur wörtlich wieder, was sie gesagt hatten, und was er mit ihnen erlebt hatte. (KB 187)

But the central support of Ford's attempt to show the narrator the possibilities of a life without alienation or isolation from others is his wish for a jolt out of history into a state of 'pure nature', which is timeless:

Er schaute hinunter ins Tal, wo noch die letzte Sonne durch die Blätter der Orangenbäume schien. "Wenn ich die Blätter sich so bewegen sehe, und die Sonne scheint durch, habe ich das Gefühl, daß sie sich schon seit einer Ewigkeit so bewegen", sagte er. "Es ist wirklich ein Gefühl der Ewigkeit, und ich vergesse dabei, daß es eine Geschichte gibt. Ihr würdet es ein mittelalterliches Gefühl nennen, einen Zustand, in dem alles noch Natur ist." (KB 190)

The result of this 'Stoppen der Geschichte und Auflösung des Lebens in reine Natur'³⁸ is that the individual is no longer aware of his own historical identity, and that any change in human society is arrested. In fact, Ford's desire for this state of 'pure nature' is seen to stem from a deep-rooted pessimism about the possibility of material progress in human society, that is, it itself has historical origins. As such, the desire is an indication

of an avoidance of reality and the naive wish that everything should stay as it is:

"Bis vor einem Jahrhundert haben noch die Leute für den Fortschritt gesorgt, die die Macht hatten, ihn auch herbeizuführen: von der Neuzeit an bis vor kurzem gingen die Heilslehren immer von den Machthabern selber aus: von den Fürsten, den Fabrikherrn, den Wohltätern. Jetzt sind aber die Machthaber keine Wohltäter der Menschheit mehr, höchstens gebärden sie sich als Wohltäter an einzelnen, und nur noch die Armen, die Mittellosen und Machtlosen, denken sich etwas Neues aus. Die, die allein etwas ändern könnten, machen sich keine Gedanken mehr, und so muß alles beim alten bleiben." (KB 190-1)

This state of 'pure nature' and the arrest of history is then reached in the final scene of the book, which takes place, in the traditional manner of the 'Bildungsroman', 'auf einem Hügel als gesellschaftlicher Insel': 'Und genau so wie sich im traditionellen Bildungs- und Entwicklungsroman die hierarchische Symbolfunktion der Höhe noch einmal im Gegenüber des jungen Reisenden und des weisen Alten spiegelt, erkennen wir auch bei Handke die Hierarchie der Partner.'³⁹ But, as Elm goes on to point out, we do not encounter here the traditional conversation about 'Geschichte, Philosophie, Literatur und Musik', nor do we see the 'Harmonisierung (...) von Vielseitigkeit und Einseitigkeit, von Universalwissen und Spezialisierung, von aristokratischer Idealität und bürgerlicher Realität'.⁴⁰ Rather, in a 'magical' moment, the alienation between inner and outer world is overcome and history stops: the state of 'pure nature' is reached:

Auf den gegenüberliegenden Hügeln blitzte es schon. Das Gras um uns herum war hoch, mit hellen und dunklen Schatten lief manchmal der Wind durch. Die Blätter der Bäume wurden umgedreht, flimmerten wie verwelkt. Eine Zeitlang war es windstill. Dann raschelte hinter uns ein Gebüsch, während alle anderen Büsche ganz ruhig blieben. Der Wind in dem Gebüsch legte sich, und einen Augenblick später rauschte unten neben dem Haus ganz kurz eine Baumkrone auf. Alles war dann ruhig, ohne Bewegung: eine lange, anhaltende

Windstille; und plötzlich rieselte zu unseren Füßen wieder das Gras. Man blinzelte, und schon war es ringsherum düster geworden, die Gegenstände dicht auf der Erde. Die Luft wurde drückend. (KB 194)

The novel ends with a transcendence of the alienation it portrays in concrete terms earlier in its course. Similarly, there is also the contradiction, 'daß das der gesellschaftlichen Welt verpflichtete Sozialverhalten, das zum Gegenstand der utopischen Sehnsucht erhoben ist, in der Gesellschaftsferne einer idyllischen Welt gepriesen wird'.⁴¹ Perhaps it is therefore, in the light of these criticisms, not inappropriate that Handke chooses the figure of John Ford in his portrayal of this mythical conclusion. The discrepancy between Ford's views here and the actual reality of his films, the setting of the scene in an 'amoener Landschaft unter der Aura der Zeitlosigkeit',⁴² relativises the validity for the historical self of the attitudes portrayed.

In his book The Cinema of John Ford, John Baxter's account of Ford's work and his attitude to characters and story contradicts all that Handke has Ford say about himself. Dealing with his use of characters, Baxter writes:

His characters, it is often said, are realistic and warmly human, but since all his work embodies a strong moral lesson in the exploitation of which each person has a precise function, people are more often types than individuals. Individuality, in fact, is a trait Ford finds an occasionally convenient but reprehensible deviation. 43

Handke has Ford claim that all the stories in his films were true: '"Nichts davon ist erfunden", sagte er. "Alles passierte wirklich."' (KB 193). But Baxter presents Ford as inventing stories in order to transport a particular ideology, namely the myth of America and the Wild West, with characters representing the 'virtues' of 'natural

nobility, discipline and order' rather than being individuals. All is subservient to the manufacture of a 'fictitious America in which landscape, culture and society reflect his ideals'.⁴⁴ Even Ford's use of nature in his films was part of the manipulative process:

Ford's respect for landscape seems obvious, but a marked preference for theatrical and atypical areas like Yellowstone and Monument Valley, as well as his careful staging of exteriors and frequent indoor shooting of outdoor shots to gain specific effects, show that his use of nature is precise and symbolic. 43

That the figure of John Ford in Handke's novel is fictitious can clearly be seen as part of the novel being only 'die Fiktion eines Entwicklungsromans'. But, it is a weakness of the novel that it presented an analysis of the disruption of the narrator's perception of the world, of his increasing alienation from his wife, in terms which linked the specific constitution of this gap between inner and outer world to the concrete conditions of the narrator's childhood and his position in the social relations in Austria, only then to avoid a similarly concrete coming to terms with this alienation of perception by raising the action in the final instance on to the mythical plane. In the end, it would seem that Handke has not finally abandoned the hope of a 'direct', unmediated relationship between outer and inner world, of a 'magical' coincidence of the two as a means of overcoming normative, socialising forces. This pattern is certainly to re-emerge in the next group of texts: on the one hand, an historically sited analysis of the pressures on his mother to live a socialised existence; on the other hand, the presentation of any liberation from such forces within the terms of an irrational, mystical moment.

IV. OUTER WORLD AND INNER WORLD: ROLES

i) Wunschloses Unglück

The initial historically sited analysis of the relationship between the inner and outer world of the narrator in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied is reproduced in the case of Handke's mother in his next book Wunschloses Unglück. The specificity of this analysis, incorporating considerations of class- and gender-related pressures upon the individual, was a definite intention behind the writing of the account:

Ich wollte ja nicht einfach meinen Schmerz deklamieren und irgendwie zu Papier bringen, sondern ich wollte nach den Gründen fragen, warum mich das wirklich so betroffen hat, nach den, und da muß man so ein Klischee verwenden, nach den gesellschaftlichen Gründen, die eine Frau dazu bringen, einen Selbstmord zu begehen, und warum es gerade eine Frau ist und gerade diese Frau in dieser Gegend, in diesem Staat, mit dieser Erziehung, also daß dieser Selbstmord gar keine Krankheit war, sondern eine logische Konsequenz aus all der fürchterlichen Logik rundherum, und daß diese Frau das bei ganz klarem Verstand, bei überklarem Verstand vollbracht. 1

The definition of the individual from without, the individual's lack of control over his or her 'meaning', was something Handke concerned himself with in the earlier poem 'Veränderungen im Lauf des Tages' in Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt, although without the specificity of the later representation of his mother's life. The changes referred to in the title of the poem are the changes in the way others see us according to the situation in which we are seen. They are the markers of the fluidity of our identity, as it becomes circumscribed and defined by the extent and nature of our integration within a public

system of coherence. Our appearance, our significance, our 'meaning' slip out of our control, as we become parts or roles within a social game. The integrity of our individuality would seem to be threatened by the socialisation of our existence. The day can start harmlessly enough with the sentence, 'Solange ich noch allein bin, bin ich noch ich allein' (IAI 49), where the subject's individuality is defined by him and is not in doubt. This can even still be maintained within particular 'private' social settings - 'Solange ich noch unter Bekannten bin, bin ich noch ein Bekannter' (IAI 49) -, but the emergence into the world and into contact with strangers leads to the reduction of the individual to a role, to his categorisation within a public system of coherence and definition. This definition from without permeates all situations in the public sphere, so that the individual transforms into a 'customer', a 'passenger', a 'gentleman' etc. according to the position he finds himself in. The particularly insidious nature of this system of definition is shown, what is more, in the way the individual internalises it and reproduces his own categorisation, his own oppression. This will also be an element in Wunschloses Unglück. The following passage illustrates the assimilation of this oppression:

Kaum nehme ich dann die Mahlzeit ein - schon kann ich
sagen: Wir Verbraucher!
Kaum wird mir dann etwas gestohlen - schon kann ich
sagen: Wir Eigentümer!
Kaum gebe ich dann die Todesanzeige auf - schon kann
ich sagen: Wir Leidtragenden!
Kaum betrachte ich dann das Weltall - schon kann ich
sagen: Wir Menschen! (IAI 50)

Such reductionism is presented by Handke in this poem as

being unavoidable, and even the last four lines, with the seeming alleviation of the situation through the forms 'Dann, endlich' and 'Dann, schließlich', cannot rescue or restore the private subjectivity of the first line. The sentence, 'Dann, endlich, bin ich allein - und einer ist mit sich allein' (IAI 52), whilst approximating in meaning to the opening 'solange ich noch allein bin, bin ich noch ich allein', nevertheless differs in form, in that it presents the perspective from inside and outside, it treats the individual as subject, but also as object. A return to the inviolability of the subject is not achieved. In the last sentence of the poem this is then attained grammatically - 'Dann, schließlich, setze ich mich zu einem ins Gras - und bin endlich ein anderer' - but from the point of view of content the split between subject and object still remains, as the subject now becomes 'ein anderer'. The sigh of relief in the words 'schließlich' and 'endlich' after the myriad of changes in the course of the day proves to be optimistic:

Es (the poem, M.L.) ist die Erfahrung der Rollenhaftigkeit, in die der einzelne, die doch zunächst ureigenste Persönlichkeit, vom Kollektiv gedrängt wird, indem es vorgefertigte Klassifizierungsmuster und Kategorien an ihn heranwirft, die nicht nach dem Betroffenen fragen, sondern auch dem Klassifizierenden schon vom aktionalen Kontext mitgeliefert werden. 2

The poem charts Handke's distaste at definition per se, at the mediation of a system of coherence between inner and outer world, just as Kaspar charted a similar, undifferentiated distaste at language. Wunschloses Unglück has the extra dimension of consideration of the historicity of individuals' identity.

The critical reception of Handke's previous novel

Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied was noteworthy, amongst other things, for the celebration of what many critics saw as a return to narration and a turning away from the formalism of the earlier works. Whilst Peter Hamm could title his review 'Jetzt kann er ich sagen'³, limiting himself to an appreciation of the novel itself, Jürgen Jacobs and, as we saw in the discussion in the previous chapter, Theo Elm attempted to place it through reference to the literary phenomena of a definite tradition, the 'Bildungsroman'.⁴ The publication a short time later of Wunschloses Unglück was seen by many as a confirmation of such a tendency. It was impossible to ignore the presence within the text of a formal discussion of the nature of that text, but this was seen by some critics to be an auxiliary or even unnecessary part of it. Marcel Reich-Ranicki ridiculed these passages and claimed they were the remnants of 'Die Angst des Peter Handke beim Erzählen'.⁵ Günter Heintz concluded his discussion of the book by suggesting that these reflective passages could even be left out:

Es können Zweifel daran angemeldet werden, ob die verschiedentlich eingefügten theoretischen Überlegungen noch eine Funktion besitzen oder ob sie nicht vielmehr zum Selbstzweck werden. Denn oft wirken sie wie überflüssige Kommentare (...) Man lese den erzählenden Text unter Ignorierung der Einschübe im Zusammenhang, und man wird feststellen, daß das Werk nichts von seiner spezifischen Intention verliert. 6

It is our contention that Heintz is wrong in his conclusion here. There are quite clearly two strands to Handke's account. On the one hand there is reflection on the act of writing and the possible function of the literature produced. On the other hand there is the actual subject of the act of writing, the life of Handke's mother. These two strands are closely linked, firstly through the unmis-

takeable presence in both of the author, and secondly through the investigation of models. The reflection upon literary models is a concern, which, as we have seen, can be traced back to Handke's earliest works. In the prose volume Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats Handke furnished examples of certain kinds of writing - the law text, the long monologue - and of certain cinematic types - the Western, the film trailer - with the intention of making the reader more aware of the mechanics, the definite organisation, the structures underlying such means of expression. The aim was a defamiliarisation, a destruction of their 'naturalness' in the cause of the resistance to final images of the world. According to Handke, experience was forced to mould itself to the form of its expression, the model of presentation. Hence, Kaspar's inner world was seen to be moulded and shaped by the public language the 'Einsager' taught him. Through the assimilation of the 'model sentences' Kaspar was able to conceive of the world, but only within the strictly defined boundaries of the medium of perception and expression.

In Wunschloses Unglück Handke reflects on the already available models of the literary representation of his subject matter. This is seen by him to be a necessity for writing:

Wenn ich anfangen zu schreiben, gibt es sofort schon ein Modell des Schreibens, in das ich ver falle, also daß es nichts Echtes gibt, sondern daß ich wirklich nur was Individuelles und Privates - was heißt "Privates" - also: von mir schreiben kann, wenn ich die Modelle reflektiere, die es gibt von der Wirklichkeit, die sprachlichen Modelle, also die verschiedenen Sprachspiele. 7

The constant vigilance over the act of writing, the constant attempt to use 'Sprache' for 'Wirklichkeit' rather than a 'Sprachbild' in order to produce a 'Wirklichkeits-

bild', is clearly complementary to the subject of such writing. for his mother is seen to have been the victim of a model of existence. From birth her biography is seen to have been determined according to a pre-set pattern by the society in which she lived. The portrayal of her life, the public form it takes, must not then be such that it again, in its turn, only fits that life into an established representation of it. The problem is how to express what is private in public sentences.

This problem of the tension between public and private runs throughout the book. It is also present in a further two poems from the early period: 'Was ich nicht bin, nicht habe, nicht will, nicht möchte - und was ich möchte, was ich habe und was ich bin (Satzbiografie)' and 'Geschichtslügen'. In the poems it is a problem posed with reference to the sphere of literary representation. In the first poem the question of writing an individual biography in public sentences is addressed. Handke presents the reader with various sentence models, as indicated in the title, and shows that a biography constructed from such sentence models is a model of a biography, unable to differentiate that particular biography from any other. Any possible personal statements are reduced to clichés, generalisations or tautologies:

Ich bin schließlich keine Kreditanstalt (...)
 Ich bin schließlich kein Auskunftsbüro (...)
 Ich bin zwar kein Aufseher, aber auch kein blauäugiger
 Utopist (...)
 Ich bin weder ein Nationalist noch ein Gleichmacher (...)
 Ich habe immer nur das Beste gewollt (...)
 Ich bin dafür (...)
Ich bin's! (IAI 24-6)

In the second poem 'Geschichtslügen', Handke shows how individual facts are turned into generalisations or clichés

which are then accepted as general truths. The 'lies' are then not only the lies of history, but also the lies of fiction, in that its models produce a false consciousness of reality. Mixner sees this poem as an attack on the mass media:

(Handke) versucht (...) deutlich zu machen, daß die sprachlichen Informationen der Massenmedien Wirklichkeit auf Ereignisse reduzieren, und daß diese Reduktion das Bild von der Wirklichkeit, das Bewußtsein von der Welt, verfälscht, daß diese Reduktion im Grunde gar keine Information ist. 8

The poems also represent the two sides of the approach to writing his mother's biography, which Handke details in Wunschloses Unglück. On the one hand, and the connection here is with 'Geschichtslügen', he addresses the problem from the point of view of the facts:

Anfangs ging ich deswegen auch noch von den Tatsachen aus und suchte nach Formulierungen für sie. Dann merkte ich, daß ich mich auf der Suche nach Formulierungen schon von den Tatsachen entfernte. 9

With this method, fiction soon takes over and creates lies. So another method, reminiscent of that in 'Satzbiographie', is chosen:

Nun ging ich von den bereits verfügbaren Formulierungen, dem gesamtgesellschaftlichen Sprachfundus aus statt von den Tatsachen und sortierte dazu aus dem Leben meiner Mutter die Vorkommnisse, die in diesen Formeln schon vorgesehen waren. (WU 45)

This activity provides Handke with a public representation of a woman's life, with which to compare his mother's: 'Aus den Übereinstimmungen und Widersprüchlichkeiten ergibt sich dann die eigentliche Schreibttätigkeit' (WU 45-6) Handke claims to have found with this method the only way of maintaining this tension between public and private, and thereby making it productive.

The act of writing itself is a reflection of this tension

for it is, in this case, a 'making public' of a private grief. Writing about his mother is for Handke a conscious piece of work - 'eine Arbeitsanstrengung' (WU 7) - which is necessary in order to avoid the feelings of 'stumpfsinnige Sprachlosigkeit' (WU 7) which he felt at the news of her death. However, the act of writing is beset with problems, for words, literary endeavour change experience; the search for formulations takes priority over the facts. Handke had also written about this five years earlier in an essay, whilst recalling his own attitude as a child to essay writing:

Sollte ich ein Erlebnis beschreiben, so schrieb ich nicht über das Erlebnis, sondern das Erlebnis veränderte sich dadurch, daß ich darüber schrieb, oder es entstand oft erst beim Schreiben des Aufsatzes darüber, und zwar durch die Aufsatzform, die man mir eingelehrt hatte: Sogar ein eigenes Erlebnis erschien mir anders, wenn ich darüber einen Aufsatz geschrieben hatte. 10

Thus, experience of a personal nature becomes, through its public formulation, 'entrückt und vergangen' (WU 10), when the balance falls on the public side of the tension between public and private. The writer becomes 'veräußerlicht und versachlicht zu einer Erinnerungs- und Formulermaschine' (WU 10). This introduces problems of maintaining nevertheless the uniqueness of his mother's own story, the elements of the private side of the tension. Handke admits that this is precisely the reason he has written and not some interviewer, who could explain her life 'mit einer religiösen, individual-psychologischen oder soziologischen Traumdeutungstabelle' (WU 11), and thereby fit that life into yet another model. But Handke maintains that the more precisely he attempts to get to grips through words with the concrete reality of his mother's life, the

more fictional the results become: 'Ist nicht ohnehin jedes Formulieren, auch von etwas tatsächlich Passiertem, mehr oder weniger fiktiv? Weniger, wenn man sich begnügt, bloß Bericht zu erstatten; mehr, je genauer man zu formulieren versucht?' (WU 26).

Handke attempts to dismiss the simple reporting of her life as 'nichts als eine Zumutung' (WU 44), but, in considering the alternative of portraying it through a concentrated effort of personal literary endeavour, realises the dangers of 'das schmerzlose Verschwinden einer Person in poetischen Sätzen' (WU 44). In this case, the balance would fall on the private side of the tension between public and private - the sentences would render the subject matter harmless. Thus, Handke recognises that a constant balance has to be maintained between the two poles of a public and private formulation. The method used to keep this balance emphasises the two-sided nature of the problem, in that Handke compares 'den allgemeinen Formelvorrat' - that is, the publicly available sentences - 'für die Biographie eines Frauenlebens satzweise mit dem besonderen Leben meiner Mutter' (WU 45), the private sphere. This work of comparison divests the public sentences of their qualities as generalised quotations from the available reservoir of such sentences and allows them to function as expressions of a particular life. The sentences become then a 'nicht-gesuchte, öffentliche Sprache' (WU 45), public and private, general and particular. In adopting this method Handke is constructing a dialectic between the personal reality of his mother and the public expression of this reality through language. The synthesis is then

Wunschloses Unglück, which attempts to avoid the danger that each linguistic formulation is 'zugleich eine Interpretation und ein "Arrangement" der Wirklichkeit'.¹¹ This explains the denial of the 'distancing effect' of authorial activity:

Ich entferne mich nicht, wie es sonst in der Regel passiert, von Satz zu Satz mehr aus dem Innenleben der beschriebenen Gestalten und betrachte sie am Ende befreit und in heiterer Feierstimmung von außen, als endlich eingekapselte Insekten - sondern versuche mich mit gleichbleibendem starren Ernst an jemanden heranzuschreiben, den ich doch mit keinem Satz ganz fassen kann, so daß ich immer wieder neu anfangen muß und nicht zu der üblichen abgeklärten Vogelperspektive komme. (WU 46)

The act of writing attains a new looseness, and his mother accordingly 'läßt sich nicht einkapseln, bleibt unfäßlich, die Sätze stürzen in etwas Dunklem ab und liegen durcheinander auf dem Papier' (WU 47).

This lack of distance between the author and his subject matter - the refusal of his mother's memory to disappear in 'poetic sentences' - brings with it personal traumas for Handke, as the therapeutic effect of the process of fictionalisation is denied:

Noch immer wache ich in der Nacht manchmal schlagartig auf, wie von innen her mit einem ganz leichten Austupfen aus dem Schlaf gestoßen, und erlebe, wie ich bei angehaltenem Atem vor Grausen von einer Sekunde zur andern leibhaftig verfaule. (WU 99)

The failure in the end to finish the work - 'Später werde ich über das alles Genaueres schreiben' (WU 105) - is indicative of a liberation of his mother's memory. Her own attempts to break out of the life she led through conscious changes in her appearance or bearing eventually failed. The open end of Handke's novel shows that, while her life may be completed, her memory still contains future potential - a reminder of the function of memory in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied. This release

confirms one of the roles for literature Handke formulated in the early essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms'. Writing about his own reception of literature, he comments: 'Sie hat mir geholfen zu erkennen, daß ich da war, daß ich auf der Welt war' (BE 19). Wunschloses Unglück performs this service for his mother, and thereby overturns the previous literary monument to her in the cold, impersonal language of the 'Volkszeitung': '"In der Nacht zum Sonntag verübte eine 51jährige Hausfrau aus A. (Gemeinde G.) Selbstmord durch Einnehmen einer Überdosis von Schlaftabletten"' (WU 7). The finality of this announcement at the beginning of the book is gradually eroded. Wunschloses Unglück provides for Handke and for his mother the beginning of the liberation of her memory, a destruction of the final images of her existence.

In the actual subject matter of the book we encounter again this strictly defined tension between public and private, although this only becomes manifest after much of the story has been told. It becomes clear that the public side - the model of living she is expected and forced to conform to - dominates for most of the time. As such, her life is clearly an embodiment of what, in Kaspar, was merely depicted as being 'possible' with someone. The grammar and models of language have now been replaced by the grammar and models of living. The private side of the dialectic is seen in her gradual realisation of the existence for her of something other than the traditional, 'natural' woman's role in this society. It will be seen, however, that this is only a beginning, a quick glance at emancipation. Such is the extent of her internalisation of these structures

of power and expectation, that her attitude to this possibility of emancipation is ambivalent in the extreme.

The public expectations of behaviour which Handke's mother has to fulfil are manifest in the strict definitions and boundaries of the roles she must play. In a study of the category of the social role, Ralf Dahrendorf defines Man as a basically social animal: 'Keinen Schritt können wir gehen, keinen Satz sprechen, ohne daß zwischen uns und die Welt ein Drittes tritt, das uns an die Welt bindet und diese beiden so konkreten Abstraktionen vermittelt: die Gesellschaft.'¹² Our existence as individuals with verifiable identities is thus bound to the social order we live in: 'Der Vorgang der Menschwerdung findet immer in Wechselwirkung mit einer bestimmten kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Ordnung statt.'¹³ As a social being, Man cannot content himself with self-definition. He must be aware that, to the other members of that society, he is not only private but also public. This added dimension of his own existence brings with it certain problems:

Für uns ist die Gesellschaft noch jene ärgerliche Tatsache, die den Einzelnen, indem sie ihm Profil und Bestimmtheit gibt, aus seiner Einzelheit heraus in ein Allgemeines und Fremdes hebt. Die Tatsache der Gesellschaft ist ärgerlich, weil wir ihr nicht entweichen können. ¹⁴

Man becomes a role bearer as soon as he meets with society, as soon as he adopts a social position:

Zu jeder Stellung, die ein Mensch einnimmt, gehören gewisse Verhaltensweisen, die man von dem Träger dieser Position erwartet; zu allem, was er ist, gehören Dinge, die er tut und hat; zu jeder sozialen Position gehört eine soziale Rolle. Indem der Einzelne soziale Positionen einnimmt, wird er zur Person des Dramas, das die Gesellschaft, in der er lebt, geschrieben hat. Mit jeder Position gibt die Gesellschaft ihm eine Rolle, die er zu spielen hat. ¹⁵

The concept of the social role is then examined by Dahrendorf. It is maintained that its true nature exists in the demands it places upon its bearer. It is not so much an aid to living, as a rigid pattern to conform to: 'Soziale Rollen sind Bündel von Erwartungen, die sich in einer gegebenen Gesellschaft an das Verhalten der Träger von Positionen knüpfen.'¹⁶ More exactly, Dahrendorf outlines three main aspects of the social role:

(1) Soziale Rollen sind gleich Positionen quasi-objektive, vom Einzelnen prinzipiell unabhängige Komplexe von Verhaltensvorschriften. (2) Ihr besonderer Inhalt wird nicht von irgendeinem Einzelnen, sondern von der Gesellschaft bestimmt und verändert. (3) Die in Rollen gebündelten Verhaltenserwartungen begegnen dem Einzelnen mit einer gewissen Verbindlichkeit des Anspruches, so daß er sich ihnen nicht ohne Schaden entziehen kann. 17

The main common characteristic of the three aspects of the social role is the fact of their imposition on the individual and that he or she has no influence over their definition. Social roles are seen by Dahrendorf as 'ein Zwang, der auf den Einzelnen ausgeübt wird', but with an unsure value, for they can function both 'als eine Fessel seiner privaten Wünsche oder als ein Halt, der ihm Sicherheit gibt'.¹⁸

The meeting between individual and society which produces social roles is thus recognised by Dahrendorf as having implications for that individual's freedom. He sees however some hope that such freedom must not necessarily disappear completely, if a certain balance is maintained: 'Das Problem der Freiheit des Menschen als gesellschaftlichen Wesens ist ein Problem des Gleichgewichts zwischen rollenbestimmtem Verhalten und Autonomie.'¹⁹ Dahrendorf is therefore able to register the possibility of freedom within social roles:

(Es) scheint, als sei für den Menschen außer dem freien Bereich, den jede Rolle ihrem Spieler läßt, auch der durch verbindliche Erwartungen geregelte Verhaltensbereich weniger determiniert als eingegrenzt. Rollenerwartungen sind nur in seltenen Fällen definitive Vorschriften; in den meisten Fällen erscheinen sie eher als Sektor erlaubter Abweichungen. Insbesondere bei Erwartungen, an die sich vorwiegend negative Sanktionen knüpfen, ist unser Verhalten nur privativ bestimmt; wir dürfen gewisse Dinge nicht tun, aber solange wir diese vermeiden, sind wir in unserem Verhalten frei. Überdies impliziert das entfremdete Verhältnis des Einzelnen und der Gesellschaft, daß er zugleich Gesellschaft ist und nicht ist, daß die Gesellschaft seine Persönlichkeit prägt und diese doch ihrerseits die Möglichkeit hat, die Gesellschaft mitzuprägen. Rollenerwartungen und Sanktionen sind nicht unveränderlich für alle Zeiten fixiert; vielmehr unterliegen sie wie alles Gesellschaftliche ständigem Wandel, und das tatsächliche Verhalten und die Meinungen des Einzelnen befördern diesen Wandel. 20

It is difficult to reconcile Dahrendorf's last two sentences here with the life of Handke's mother. Such is the rigidity of the roles she is expected to play that there is no room for her to influence any change in those roles. In any case, Dahrendorf's explanation ignores the power relations within a society as being a major force behind the determination of an individual's position within that society:

Das Rollenmodell kann immer nur beschreibend verwendet werden. Es bewegt sich auf der Oberfläche, kann Herrschaftsverhältnisse nie erklären und tendiert dazu, sie als ahistorische vorzugeben. Im Zusammenhang mit der sozial-strukturellen Theorie dient es dann in der Regel dazu, Herrschaftspositionen zu legitimieren. In dieser Theorie erscheint die kapitalistische Gesellschaft als Leistungsgesellschaft in einem Rollenspiel, in dem die Verteilung von Machtpositionen Folge individueller Fähigkeiten ist und nicht Folge des Besitzes oder Nichtbesitzes von Produktionsmitteln. 21

Although providing some useful insights, Dahrendorf's account must be expanded to include consideration of class and gender as historical factors in the determination of an individual's position. The necessity of such an expansion is clear from Handke's own account of his mother's life. The

limitations on her freedom are not only class-based, but are also based on the attitudes within that class to women. The existing property relations at the time of her birth were almost feudal:

Was von der Gegend nutzbar war, gehörte damals der Kirche oder adeligen Grundbesitzern; ein Teil davon war an die Bevölkerung verpachtet, die vor allem aus Handwerkern und kleinen Bauern bestand. Die allgemeine Mittellosigkeit war so groß, daß Kleinbesitz an Grundstücken noch ganz selten war. Praktisch herrschten noch die Zustände von vor 1848, gerade, daß die formelle Leibeigenschaft aufgehoben war. (WU 12-13)

Ownership of property was seen in such conditions as the mark of freedom, and saving was the only way to accumulate capital to buy property for people in such a position within the existing social relations. With such an accent on saving, there arose the necessity to repress individual needs in order to be able to save that much more. This 'gespenstische Bedürfnislosigkeit' (WU 15) was also instilled in the children, and, in Handke's mother's case, determined one of her basic characteristics, her lack of wishes. Handke constructs here therefore a direct causal link between the position of the parents in the production process, their attitude to and methods of educating the children, and the actual personality structure of those children. The additional factor in this connection is then the differing treatment of men and women, with the latter playing a purely secondary role: 'Als Frau in diese Umstände geboren zu werden, ist von vornherein schon tödlich gewesen. (...) Keine Möglichkeit, alles schon vorgesehen' (WU 17). Such is the permeation of these attitudes that oppression of both men and women becomes internalised and self-reproducing, so that people's consciousness is unable

to deal with any kind of liberation and indeed fears it. Handke's grandmother is presented, both as a wife and as a woman, as being unable to imagine or expect any other life: 'Seine Frau, als Frau, hatte von Geburt an ohnehin von etwas anderem nicht einmal träumen können' (WU 15). The next generation, in this case the grandmother's sons, is marked by a similar deference to the pre-determined:

Und noch in den Söhnen waren die jahrhundertealten Alpträume der Habenichtse, die überall nur in der Fremde waren, so eingefleischt, daß einer von ihnen, der mehr zufällig als geplant eine Freistelle auf dem Gymnasium bekommen hatte, die unheimische Umgebung schon nach ein paar Tagen nicht mehr aushielt, zu Fuß in der Nacht die vierzig Kilometer von der Landeshauptstadt nach Hause ging und vor dem Haus - es war ein Samstag, an dem üblicherweise Haus und Hof sauber gemacht wurden - sofort ohne ein Wort den Hof zu kehren anfang; das Geräusch, das er mit dem Besen machte, in der Morgendämmerung, war ja Zeichen genug. (WU 15-16)

The balance between role-determined behaviour and autonomy, which Dahrendorf sees as encapsulating human freedom within a social existence, is thus tilted in the case of Handke's mother. She would seem to have no sphere of autonomy within her formative years, no possibility of a private life. Her life is public and determined by forces outside her control. Social mobility or the possibility of change would seem to be blocked, for the all-encompassing rigidity of her ascribed position within that particular set of social relations denies any notion of an achieved position through personal action.

The rigidity of this public position can be traced in the first half of the book. Such was the tradition, the 'naturalness' and the common validity of this position that it had already entered into folklore: 'So heißen ja schon die Stationen eines Kinderspiels, das in der Gegend

von den Mädchen viel gespielt wurde: Müde/ Matt/ Krank/ Schwerkrank/ Tot' (WU 17). Handke reflects upon the situation of women in this society in terms similar to Dahrendorf's ambivalence concerning the value of the constraints placed upon individuals by their social roles. Whilst to be a woman under these conditions is on the one hand 'deadly', which of course turns out to be literally true for Handke's mother, on the other hand it has its 'compensations': 'Man kann es aber auch beruhigend nennen: jedenfalls keine Zukunftsangst' (WU 17). With no future - girls never had their palms read, only boys - comes no admission of the possibility of development or change. As with the narrator's childhood in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, Handke's mother has no external referents of change, no sources of comparison: 'Keine Vergleichsmöglichkeiten zu einer anderen Lebensform' (WU 19). These are only to come later with the reading of literature, although even this only serves to show her how many opportunities have been denied her. As a child, basic schooling was completed rapidly and was seen as a duty rather than a pleasure, and, in the case of women, was seen to have no connection with their future life: 'Das Lernen war nur ein Kinderspiel gewesen, nach erfüllter Schulpflicht, mit dem Erwachsenwerden, wurde es unnötig. Die Frauen gewöhnten sich nun zu Hause an die künftige Häuslichkeit' (WU 18). The subversive potential of education - the expression of a private existence, a wish - is stifled and controlled by the patriarchy:

Es fing damit an, daß meine Mutter plötzlich Lust zu etwas bekam: sie wollte lernen; denn beim Lernen damals als Kind hatte sie etwas von sich selber gefühlt.

Es war gewesen, wie wenn man sagt: "Ich fühle mich." Zum ersten Mal ein Wunsch, und er wurde auch ausgesprochen, immer wieder, wurde endlich zur fixen Idee. Meine Mutter erzählte, sie habe den Großvater "gebettelt", etwas lernen zu dürfen. Aber das kam nicht in Frage: Handbewegungen genügten, um das abzutun; man winkte ab, es war undenkbar. (WU 20)

Mental confinement is then complemented by a physical confinement to the house, which quickly extinguished any broadening of horizons. 'Outside' was the yard, and 'inside' was 'ausnahmslos das eigene Haus ohne eigenes Zimmer' (WU 19). The impossibility of any other reality

than this strictly socialised existence came to exact its toll upon the imagination of the women: outer world prescribed and moulded inner world. Happiness was sometimes present in some form or other, but wishing, the projection of an imagined future on an expected future, the construction of a personal and private reality, was non-existent: 'Selten wunschlos und irgendwie glücklich, meistens wunschlos und ein bißchen unglücklich' (WU 19). Personal, private desire was eclipsed by the demands of the specific public existence for women.

The limitations and restrictions placed not only upon women, but also upon the class of the 'Kleinbürger' as a whole, make them particularly susceptible to the liberation which fascism under Hitler seemed to offer. The political consciousness of these people is almost non-existent as natural occurrences and political events are both viewed as facts which the individual can do nothing to influence or alter: 'Immerhin gab es in der Bevölkerung eine überlieferte Achtung vor den vollendeten Tatsachen: eine Schwangerschaft, der Krieg, der Staat, das Brauchtum und der Tod' (WU 20). Not that the petit-bourgeois felt any need, according to

Handke, to resist the annexation of Austria. This political event was, in any case, presented as a natural occurrence, as if both man-made objects and natural phenomena greeted it as something worth celebrating: 'Kundgebungen mit Fackelzügen und Feierstunden; die mit neuen Hoheitszeichen versehenen Gebäude bekamen STIRNSEITEN und GRÜSSTEN; die Wälder und die Berggipfel SCHMÜCKTEN SICH; der ländlichen Bevölkerung wurden die geschichtlichen Ereignisse als Naturschauspiel vorgestellt' (WU 23). Fascism's promises of liberation and a new order were particularly attractive to a class which was stuck in the limitations of the old. Everyday life took on the appearance of a celebration, in which everyone took part: 'Zum ersten Mal gab es Gemeinschaftserlebnisse. Selbst die werktägliche Langeweile wurde festtäglich stimmungsvoll, "bis in die späten Nachtstunden hinein"' (WU 23). Fascism provided a coherence and series of connections which helped to order and render harmless the complexities and alienation of life for that class: 'Endlich einmal zeigte sich für alles bis dahin Unbegreifliche und Fremde ein großer Zusammenhang: es ordnete sich in eine Beziehung zueinander, und selbst das befremdend automatische Arbeiten wurde sinnvoll, als Fest' (WU 23). Work becomes a communal activity with its own rhythms, which are repeated by thousands of others. The world becomes everybody's home, and everybody is a potential friend. Fascism is presented as providing everyone with 'a good time' and the possibility of advancement - 'Diese Zeit half meiner Mutter, aus sich herauszu-gehen und selbständig zu werden' (WU 25) -, and yet fascism also presented itself, or was perceived as such in the

minds of the petit-bourgeois, as having no connection with 'politics':

Aus keinem Satz und keiner Regung geht hervor, daß die Menschen auch nur im Ansatz begreifen, was sich hier zusammenbraut, welcher Gefährdung sie selbst und die Welt nun ausgesetzt sind. Sie reagieren auf den Nationalsozialismus wie auf eine Schickung aus jenseitigen Sphären, wie überhaupt ihr Verhältnis zu ihm nicht anders als mit parareligiösen Worten zu beschreiben ist. Faschismus ist für sie eine Art von gemeinschaftsstiftendem Mythos, der die ehemals kirchliche Gemeinde ersetzt und überhöht. (...) Gerade (...) in dem aufgeputschten Glauben, hier sei Aufbruch und Entfaltung möglich, liegt die diabolische Verführungskraft des Faschismus für das Kleinbürgertum. 2:

The outbreak of war was perceived as 'eine Serie mit gewaltiger Musik angekündigter Erfolgsmeldungen aus dem stoffbespannten Lautsprecherkreis' (WU 26). Whilst for the child Handke it forms a 'die zukünftige Empfindungswelt mitbestimmendes Angstgespenst' (WU 26-7), his mother reacts quite differently. Oblivious to the real issues, it becomes for her akin to a travel programme, opening up all kinds of exotic places, giving her a sense of distance and a sense of her feelings for family members.

But the sense of collective under fascism was only a myth. It had its own ideology of social roles, and nowhere was this more apparent than in its attitude to women, attempting to limit their lives to the home and the armaments factory. So, when his mother gets pregnant, the familiar restrictions re-assert themselves. She is forced to marry a German N.C.O. What is more, he is not the father of the child, but appearances have to be maintained: 'Er war ihr zuwider, aber man redete ihr das Pflichtbewußtsein ein (dem Kind einen Vater geben): zum ersten Mal ließ sie sich einschüchtern, das Lachen verging ihr ein bißchen' (WU 30). A short visit to Berlin is followed by a return

to the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Austrian village: 'Kam denn nichts mehr? Sollte es das schon gewesen sein?' (WU 31). As the war is lost, so the 'promises' of fascism fade. The feelings of freedom it had given her remain inexpressible as she re-adopts the public role of women in the rural setting and foregoes a personal inner life: 'Wenn sie von sich selber sprach, über einen berichtenden Satz hinaus, wurde sie mit einem Blick zum Schweigen gebracht' (WU 33). Returning from the city with a certain amount of self-awareness - 'Meine Mutter hatte in der Stadt schon geglaubt, eine Lebensform gefunden zu haben, die ihr ein wenig entsprach' (WU 33) - she is confronted with a society where women lived their lives publicly, in as exemplary a manner as possible, this being the only way they could be noticed by others, the only way they could influence others. This self-perpetuating element of women's socialisation in this society gradually extends its influence on to Handke's mother. She learns to order and becomes in turn ordered: 'Sie wurde also eingeteilt und lernte auch selber das Einteilen, an Leuten und Gegenständen, obwohl daran kaum etwas zu lernen war' (WU 36). Estranged from her feelings and hopes, she becomes a concrete instance of a process Handke first concerned himself with in Kaspar, that is, 'die lebenszerstörende Wirkung einer entfremdeten Existenzform, in der es keine Möglichkeit der Selbstentfaltung gibt'.²³

The additional dimension in Wunschloses Unglück is that of the eventual step towards emancipation, a step which had also been taken in Das Mündel will Vormund sein. That moment was however relativised by Handke through the

'senselessness' of the ward's actions once the guardian had been eliminated, and through their obvious dependence upon the ward's perception of the guardian's former actions, so that they were rather an imitation or reproduction of these internalised actions and not a particularly valid expression of his own emancipation. The control of the guardian carried on, even after his death. Another mechanism of oppression in that play was shame, and this features strongly in Wunschloses Unglück as well. The especially insidious nature of this is that it comes from inside: the subject regulates him- or herself: 'die immer gepredigte, inzwischen verkörperte Scham' (WU 38). Shame operates as a barrier to the will, erecting systems of good and bad between Handke's mother and her own desires. As such, shame comes to be the internalisation of external values, values which are historically produced and linked to the dominant set of social relations. Handke's mother's inner world is moulded by the society she lives in and there is in this instance no mutual influence of the kind Dahrendorf postulates as being one of the saving graces of a social existence. Her sexuality is regulated and defined by this male-dominated society: hence her feelings of this lack of control cause her to avoid affairs, and later she only goes out with 'KAVALIERE' (WU 38), where there is no question of sexual involvement. Her sexuality is only seen in its totally public function, motherhood. To all other intents and purposes, she becomes sexless: 'Sie wurde ein neutrales Wesen, veräußerte sich in den täglichen Kram' (WU 38).

During the war and the experience of fascism, but before her return to the country, Handke's mother is

reported as standing 'bei allen Ereignissen wie mit offenem Mund daneben' (WU 32). This is the gesture of wonder at the world, of openness to new experience. After the war, as the world stabilises and the 'celebration' of those years recedes, so this gesture is lost: 'Der Mund, bis jetzt immer noch wenigstens ab und zu offengeblieben, (...) wurde in dieser neuen Lebenslage übertrieben fest geschlossen, als Zeichen der Anpassung an eine allgemeine Entschlossenheit' (WU 39-40). With conformity comes a certain anonymity and typicality - such liberation from an individual past is part of the suppression of the memory of fascism - from which Handke's mother derives some comfort. She is able to escape from her 'beschämenden Einsamkeit und Beziehungslosigkeit' (WU 41) and experience herself as an object without any particularly individual characteristics: 'In einer solchen Beschreibung als Typ fühlte man sich auch von seiner eigenen Geschichte befreit, weil man auch sich selber nur noch erlebte wie unter dem ersten Blick eines erotisch taxierenden Fremden' (WU 40-1). With this increasing distance from one's own personal, private existence comes a complementary regulation of that life which she does lead. It is a life in which interpersonal contact is entangled in such a system of prescriptions and rules, that any freedom of movement within these relationships is seen as a deviation from the strict norm. There arises the situation 'wo also alle Umgangsformen schon so sehr als verbindliche Regeln aufgefaßt werden, daß jedes mehr einzelne, auf den andern ein bißchen eingehende Verhalten nur eine Ausnahme von diesen Regeln bedeutet' (WU 41). Each person, trapped within this institutionalisation of human relationships,

becomes isolated within the alienated forms of human intercourse, and any notion of personal development is abandoned: 'Sie war; sie wurde; sie wurde nichts' (WU 44).

This lack of self-definition, this playing out of a life within externally set limits, leads to a general cynicism about the plans or wishes of others:

Vor allem der Ehemann wurde, sooft er von seinen vielen Vorhaben erzählte, jedesmal so scharf ausgelacht, daß er bald stockte und nur noch stumpf zum Fenster hinausschaute. Freilich fing er am nächsten Tag frisch davon an. (...) So unterbrach sie auch die Kinder, wenn sie sich etwas wünschten, indem sie sie auslachte; denn es war lächerlich, ernstlich Wünsche zu äußern. Inzwischen brachte sie das dritte Kind zur Welt. (WU 49-50)

Any aspect of a private existence was ridiculed: 'Wenn jemand von sich redete und nicht einfach schnurrig etwas erzählte, nannte man ihn "eigen". (...) "Individuum" war auch nur bekannt als ein Schimpfwort' (WU 51). Public ritual in the church or the village carnivals became the external, acceptable form of private feelings:

Das persönliche Schicksal, wenn es sich überhaupt jemals als etwas Eigenes entwickelt hatte, wurde bis auf Traumreste entpersönlicht und ausgezehrt in den Riten der Religion und der guten Sitten, so daß von den Individuen kaum etwas Menschliches übrigblieb. (WU 51)

The individual self fades away as the corporate body is emphasised. All is subject to public sanction so that 'spontan zu leben (...) das hieß schon, eine Art von Unwesen treiben' (WU 52). The loss of 'eine eigene Geschichte und eigene Gefühle' (WU 52), the loss of awareness of one's existence as a separate entity with hopes and wishes led, in the case of Handke's mother, to an almost complete denial of the private sphere. No longer is there curiosity, no longer the attraction of the unknown, newness or change,

but rather the irony of the complete reversal of the notion of wishing. The things wished for at Christmas, far from being indications of the realm of private phantasy, are determined by need and economic stringency - underwear, handkerchiefs and socks (WU 56). The internalisation of this suppression of the private sphere leads to her life becoming 'ein Naturschauspiel mit einem menschlichen Requisit, das dabei systematisch entmenscht wurde' (WU 62). This dehumanisation is increased by her tangles with bureaucracy, the necessity of having to do all the housework without the help of machines, the monotony and 'sameness' of every day - 'Heute war gestern, gestern war alles beim alten' (WU 65). Even the advent then of labour saving machines cannot of course reverse years of self-denial:

Der Mixer, der Elektroherd, der Kühlschrank, die Waschmaschine: immer mehr Zeit für einen selber. Aber man stand nur wie schrecksteif herum, schwindlig von dem langen Vorleben als bestes Stück und Heizenmännchen. Auch mit den Gefühlen hatte man so sehr haushalten müssen, daß man sie höchstens noch in Versprechern äußerte und sie dann sofort überspielen wollte. (WU 66)

In spite of the 'naturalness' of this life, Handke maintains that his mother began to assert herself, not only in her attitude to others, but also in the way she began to read books. For Handke himself, literature carries within it the possibility of a re-evaluation of reality. In the early theoretical essay he writes:

Ich erwarte von einem literarischen Werk eine Neuigkeit für mich, etwas, das mich, wenn auch geringfügig, ändert, etwas, das mir eine noch nicht gedachte, noch nicht bewußte Möglichkeit der Wirklichkeit bewußt macht, eine neue Möglichkeit zu sehen, zu sprechen, zu denken, zu existieren. (BE 19-20)

This future dimension of literature does not exist to any

great extent for his mother. Literature does cause her to speak of herself, but it is for her a confirmation of the past and not a description of a possible future; it is a registration of a lost or denied opportunity: 'Die Literatur brachte ihr nicht bei, von **jetzt an** an sich selber zu denken, sondern beschrieb ihr, daß es dafür inzwischen zu spät war' (WU 68). Nevertheless, his mother takes some steps towards reassertion of her self, and Handke co-ordinates his writing with these signs of an awakening private realm: 'Allmählich kein "man" mehr; nur noch "sie"' (WU 72). She attempts to break out of her former life by conscious changes in her bearing and appearance, but the tyranny of her position in that society was too strong to allow an escape: 'Sie versuchte, unordentlich zu werden, aber dazu hatten sich die täglichen Handgriffe schon zu sehr verselbstständigt' (WU 74). She gradually falls out of her role - 'Sie konnte nicht mehr die Hausfrau spielen' (WU 79) - but this offers no emancipation, for what she drifts into is 'die fleischgewordene animalische Verlassenheit' (WU 77) with no feelings, no recognition of her environment, loss of care for her children. The transition from a publicly regulated existence to a measure of privacy is tantamount to a casting off of those very elements which gave her meaning in the world. This individual act of rebellion, if it can even be called that, changes nothing in that world, but merely leaves Handke's mother more isolated and alone.

She becomes misanthropic and eventually falls prey in her faltering steps towards emancipation to what Handke, earlier in the book, had called 'das Vorteile-Nachteile-

Denken, das böseste der Lebensprinzipien' (WU 65), a structure of thinking which is able to make the most adverse of conditions bearable by maintaining that everything has its 'pros and cons'. As such, her previous life appears bearable again. A relativisation of the step towards emancipation takes place here within the depiction of her ambivalence to such emancipation. Dahrendorf had suggested in his study that the constraints of the social role could cause a sense of security in the role bearer. Handke's mother experiences something very similar, such is her inability to imagine her life any other way without acute feelings of anxiety and fear. Confined for most of her life in a socialised, public existence, the sudden opening vista of a private life causes the tension between the two poles to be keenly felt. She feels relief now at being fitted into a bureaucratic system after a visit to the doctor (WU 83). She lacks the ultimate strength as an isolated individual to choose between two possibilities, indeed formerly she never knew there were possibilities, and yet the notion of collective action is also unknown to her. So she becomes trapped between fear of both life and death: 'Das bloße Existieren wurde zu einer Tortur. Aber ebenso grauste sie sich vor dem Sterben' (WU 90).

The wrench out of her public existence is not enough to propel Handke's mother into a life which would do justice to her. Indeed, it is doubtful whether such a society could provide her with the possibility of such a life. Her suicide is a refusal to compromise any more - "Ich will mich nicht mehr zusammennehmen" (WU 91) - but it is definitely a capitulation rather than a liberation: "Du wirst es nicht verstehen", schrieb sie an ihren Mann. "Aber

an ein Weiterleben ist nicht zu denken" (WU 91). It is only Handke's literary undertaking after all which saves her from anonymous oblivion, and which registers the historicity of her life. The burial ceremony dehumanises her through its ritual, so that the memory of her life, an historical phenomenon, threatens to fade before nature. However Handke will not allow her return to the earth, but insists upon the recording of her life in its social and historical context. As such, he revives her memory for the future, but, as we shall see in our discussion of Die linkshändige Frau, any notion of emancipation from these social forces on women through their avoidance and transcendence is illusory in the extreme.

ii) Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus

In his next published work, the play Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus, Handke constructs a tension and conflict similar to that in Wunschloses Unglück. The poles of this tension could be stated in the terms of 'rational' and 'irrational'. The 'rational' pole is that of the public sphere, outer world, the sphere of order, of a clinical technology, of an hierarchical class system, into which the characters of the play, the entrepreneurs and, lower down the scale, Hans and Kilb, fit, and within which their role-based behaviour is expected to reflect and complement their position. On the other hand, there is the 'irrational' pole, the private sphere, inner world, the sphere of disorder, of spontaneity of action, of the individual subject, of 'jumps of consciousness', to which, as we saw in our discussion

of Kaspar, Handke attaches so much importance as indicators of a free and unlimited inner world. The main character, Quitt, is situated within this tension, pulled at one time towards his 'responsibilities' as a public figure, towards his role as an entrepreneur within a consumerist society, which demands 'rational' behaviour of him at all times, if he is to protect his interests effectively. At other times Quitt leans towards 'irrational' self-assertion, towards commitment to his own wishes and needs supposedly outside the constraints placed upon the role-bearer by his social responsibilities. Nägele and Voris define the basic situation of the play as 'der Konflikt zwischen dem phantasmatisch ersehnten Subjekt, das unmittelbar aus sich selber sein möchte, und seiner realen Identität, die ihm durch seine gesellschaftliche Rollenfunktion gegeben ist'.²⁴ The conflict between playing a role and a 'true' identity is noticed too by other critics:

Das Widerspiel von Sein und Schein, die Vorstellung von der Theaterhaftigkeit der menschlichen Existenz und die Sehnsucht nach einem Leben in innerer Übereinstimmung mit sich selbst konstituieren das dramatische Gefüge des Stückes. 25

Spannungen entstehen - bei der Hauptfigur Quitt - aus dem Gegensatz von Ich-Behauptung und Rollenidentifikation. Die Richtung dieser Spannungen wird ausgemacht durch die Bewegung auf ihre Unauflösbarkeit und zugleich ihre Unvereinbarkeit hin. 26

Indeed, this conflict is presented in Quitt's case to be indissoluble and at the same time a false, invalid conflict within the social reality of advanced capitalism. Quitt's individual attempts to assert himself are relativised through their theatrical quality and their obvious anachronism which are tied to the main point that a 'falling out of a role' for such an integrated figure is itself yet another

facet of that original role. Quitt's inner world and his 'irrationalism' are merely extensions of his all-encompassing public existence.

The initial setting of the play highlights the distilled nature of possible events in relation to their effectiveness within an external reality. Handke has opted to present in the first half of the play a realistically recognisable set, a large penthouse apartment. However, such a set carries with it connotations of an isolation from society, inhabited by people who are divorced from the day-to-day life of the majority of people. The irony is that, although this may be the case, the power of the entrepreneurs is nevertheless so great that their influence upon outside events is unimaginably large. The set mirrors this power and the importance of modern technology for that power. Quitt first appears as the archetypal manager going through his home fitness routine whilst his butler stands by with refreshments: Quitt demonstrates his physical power by hitting the sandbag with all his might, he would seem to be master over all.

Handke then immediately contradicts this impression - an opening he has employed before in Publikumsbeschimpfung and Der Ritt über den Bodensee - with Quitt's first words: 'Ich bin heute traurig'.²⁷ This statement of a private feeling contradicts Quitt's public appearance. Here is someone who is only outwardly in control. Quitt goes on to describe his reasons for being sad. He feels alone and dislocated: 'Alles stand von mir abgewendet, in einer sanften Harmonie' (U 7). The curve of the tram track is described as cutting deep into his heart, 'wie ein Sehn-

suchtstraum' (U 8). This is totally unexpected language for totally unexpected feelings from one of the stalwarts of big business. The language is poetical, has a quality of 'irrationalism' about it, which is so in contrast to the world Quitt inhabits. Hans, his servant, cynically confirms this. He cannot believe that this side of Quitt is genuine, that Quitt would ride in a tram for any other reason than pure commercial gain, 'um den Kontakt mit den Leuten nicht zu verlieren und ihre Bedürfnisse zwecks Produktion neuer Produkte zu studieren' (U 7). For him, Quitt only exists within the public sphere, as an entrepreneur. Indeed, Hans himself only has meaning and identity as Quitt's servant within such a public sphere, so any other perception of Quitt is out of the question. Consequently, he advises Quitt: 'Sie müssen vernünftig bleiben, Herr Quitt. In Ihrer Klasse können Sie sich solche Zustände nicht leisten. Ein Unternehmer, der so spricht, auch wenn ihm danach zumute ist, deklamiert nur. Ihre Gefühle sind Luxus, unnütz. Nützlich wären sie denen, die danach auch leben könnten' (U 8). Hans touches upon the important point here. How far is Quitt's existence already directed by forces outside his control, by the constraints of the social role? Is Quitt so integrated into this public existence that a rejection of it is out of the question, and therefore such manifestations of an inner world are indeed useless to him? How much of the theatrical nature of the rejection of role playing which is to come is already anticipated here by Hans when he remarks: 'Und wie Herr Quitt gerade aus seiner Rolle fiel, das war auch nur ein Spiel?' (U 8)? It would seem that the tension and conflict between public and private, which was

maintained by Handke in the biography of his mother, is relativised here from the very beginning. How seriously can we take Quitt's individualistic attempts to break out of the society he lives in and its constraints?

Certainly, Quitt himself takes them seriously. He places great weight upon the importance of his feelings: 'Übrigens war ich richtig über mich gerührt, als ich in meiner Traurigkeit die am Morgen von mir selber zurückgeschlagene Bettdecke sah. Ich werde dir beweisen, daß meine Gefühle brauchbar sind' (U 13). Hans, however, is still sceptical: 'Von einem verrückten Unternehmer ist mir noch nichts zu Ohren gekommen. Nur die Fremdbestimmten werden sich selber unheimlich. Aber Sie sind gar nicht fähig, uneins mit der Welt zu sein. Und wenn, dann machen Sie Kapital daraus' (U 13). There are two important points in this short speech. Firstly, the fact that Hans does not regard Quitt as having no control over his own life is a reflection of the complete subordination of Hans' position and has consequences for any interpretation of Hans' 'liberation' at the end of the play. Secondly, Hans postulates here a basic incompatibility between Quitt's position in the world and a falling out of his role. The entrepreneur in Quitt, so Hans maintains, is such an internalised position that he would immediately use this falling out of the role for gain. Quitt cannot escape the coercion to exploit material - in this case the material of his inner world - for profit.

Nevertheless, Quitt insists that he has feelings of not being 'at one' with things, of being alienated from phenomena and people:

Andrerseits komme ich manchmal irgendwohin und glaube, mich in der Tür geirrt zu haben. Gleich wird man mich fragen, wer ich bin. Oder ich stehe in meinem leeren Büroraum plötzlich auf einer schiefen Ebene, sehe den Bleistift von der Tischplatte rollen und alle Papiere herunterrutschen. Sogar wenn ich hier hereinkomme, beschleicht es mich oft, ich sei in eine fremde Wohnung eingedrungen. Oft denke ich beim Anblick eines vertrauten Gegenstands: Wo ist da der Schwindel? Lang Bekannte rede ich auf einmal mit Sie an. (U 14)

Quitt finishes this speech by running with his head against the sandbag and crying out, 'Was ist noch möglich? Was kann ich noch tun?' (U 14-15). In the mirror image of his eventual suicide, where he runs with his head against a rock, Quitt is already 'giving an answer' to the question he poses and then explores during the rest of the play. Clearly, for the audience with no knowledge of later events, this cannot be received at the time as such and must be taken merely as an indication of Quitt's despair. Nevertheless Handke is qualifying again here the validity of even attempting to solve the 'problem' manifest in Quitt. Is there any course of action which can lead to an acceptable solution? Is it a problem which can be posed and answered in a language valid for the specific situation Quitt is in? He is, after all, not the victim, as was Handke's mother, of the social conditions, but rather intimately involved in their creation and continuance.

Quitt enters into a conversation with Kilb, the small shareholder, and it would seem that the 'irrational' side of Quitt's nature is beginning to assert itself as the social barriers between the two drop: 'Kilb, ich bewundere Sie seit langem. (...) Ich beneide Sie auch. Ich fühle mich neben Ihnen eng in meiner Haut und merke, wie begrenzt ich bin. Da wir gerade allein sind, kann ich Ihnen das sagen' (U 16). At this point the relaxation in social

position and constraint has emanated from Quitt. Even before this, when Kilb has been speaking, he has spoken almost exclusively about Quitt. Now Kilb contributes to the new tone by pulling Quitt towards him by the ears and kissing him on the lips. Immediately Quitt kicks him, and Kilb remarks: 'Damit der frühere Zustand wiederhergestellt ist' (U 16). Roles can be circumvented, but only by the more powerful party - indeed, the ability to circumvent roles is an expression of that power. Again Handke qualifies Quitt's attempt to cast off the constraints and power of his public existence. Within the first ten pages of the play, Handke has thus set the tone of the portrayal of the action, the tone of the treatment of the basic conflict.

At this point, the entrepreneurs arrive and Quitt is confronted with people of his own social standing. The other characters are seen to illustrate various stock impressions of people in their class. Lutz' first speech abounds with metaphors of hidden violence and power over others: 'Wir ließen ihn noch ein wenig zappeln und steckten ihn dann in den Sack' (U 17). Von Wullnow displays a sentimental streak as he praises the bicycle outside Quitt's house as a link with their humble beginnings, 'ein ähnliches schenkte mir mein Vater damals im Osten zugleich mit den ersten Knickerbockern' (U 17), but once he learns who the bicycle belongs to (Kilb), it takes on a different value: 'Ich habe mich gleich gewundert, daß es so verdreckt ist'. Later, von Wullnow sentimentalises again about the 'good old days' when workers took a pride in their work, and he blames them for not doing so today. With similar short-sightedness Koerber-Kent complains that the workers only buy deep freezes

and never go to the theatre - 'der Konsum knackt den Charakter' (U 21) - but ignores or is unable because of his own position within the social conditions to see that he creates, stimulates and profits from this consumerism. As the entrepreneurs talk and construct a world through their talk, so Quitt falls back into his role within that world, exchanges memories and ideas, and so the pact to control the prices on the market is formed. Quitt begins a long speech, in which he provides, or starts to provide, a 'rational' analysis of the problems facing the businessmen, but slowly the content of the speech changes as his 'irrationalism' shows through.

The first three points in the speech are concerned with the state of the market, but after this the pattern is broken: 'Viertens: Wir gehen manchmal für uns durch den Wald, um uns zwischendurch in der Natur als Menschen fühlen zu dürfen. Fünftens zu v. Wullnow: Ich spüre die ganze Zeit schon den unwiderstehlichen Zwang, dir die feuchten Lippen abzuwischen' (U 29). This 'irrational' element in the speech and Kilb's reaction to it - he illustrates its 'irrationality' with an equally 'irrational' gesture: 'Er zieht sich an beiden Ohren, "so daß" die Zunge aus dem Mund kommt, zupft sich unterm Kinn, "so daß" die Zunge zurückschnellt' (U 29) - cause Lutz to ask, 'Wir feiern also schon?', and Koerber-Kent to inquire: 'Was spielten Sie da gerade? Es war doch nur gespielt, oder? Denn in Wirklichkeit sind Sie -' (U 29). For Koerber-Kent, such is the internalisation of his public identity, of his social role, that the notions of playing (games or roles) and reality are mutually exclusive. Quitt interrupts him with

'Ja, aber nur in Wirklichkeit' (U 29), postulating thereby an 'irrational' mode of existence outside the 'rational' reality Koerber-Kent inhabits. The implication is that Quitt is a true example of the entrepreneurial class, but retains, or has discovered, an 'irrationalism' which is incompatible with the ordered 'rationality' of the public world, and which breaks through his socialised identity without him being able to control it. Certainly, the others suspect the changes in him, but are nevertheless ready to trust him and give him advice: 'Vergiß deine spätzeitliche Sensibilität. Sensibel ist für mich ein Wort auf Verhütungsgummis' (U 36).

In spite of this rejection of his sensibility as an anachronism within an increasingly 'rational' world, Quitt persists in his 'irrationalism' as a marker of his individuality. Talking with Paula Tax, the '"Marxist businesswoman"',²⁸ he displays a fear of becoming 'endgültig abgeschrieben', of his identity becoming so fixed and final that children on the street can cry, 'Ich weiß, wer du bist! Ich weiß, wer du bist!' (U 38). He feels that this 'packaging' of his inner world by his position within the outer world would deny something within him, which he cannot define further:

Aus mir will immerfort etwas herausrutschen, vor dem ich Angst habe und das mich doch diebisch reizt. Sie kennen die Geschichten vom Lachen bei der Beerdigung. Einmal saß ich einer fremden Frau gegenüber, wir blickten uns so lang in die Augen, bis mir heiß wurde. Plötzlich streckte sie mir die Zunge heraus, nicht neckisch so ein bißchen zwischen den Lippen hervor, sondern ganz weit, fast bis zur Wurzel, mit dem ganzen Gesicht, eine grausliche Fratze - als ob sie sich selber mit herausstrecken wollte. Seitdem möchte ich auch so etwas tun können. Meistens gelingt es mir freilich nur im Kopf, einen winzigen Ruck lang. Es fängt damit an, daß ich jemand Wildfremdem im

Vorbeigehen die Schuhbänder aufziehen oder ihm ein Haar aus der Nase zupfen möchte, und hört auf mit der Lust, in Gesellschaft meinen Hosenschlitz aufzumachen.
(U 37)

This is clearly something more than just a momentary breaking of polite social behaviour and conventions. Quitt is so integrated within this society that such wishes would seem to represent a radical questioning of it. Yet it is noticeable that the examples of the 'something' trying to get out of Quitt all involve a certain degree of violence towards other people, whether this be actual violence in pulling a hair from someone's nose, or potential violence in displaying his sexual power in public. As such, the examples would seem to be extensions, rather than deviations, of the society and its conventions Quitt is trying to escape from. Now, the violence is simply in the open, whereas the entrepreneurs hide and conceal theirs behind sentimental phrases about working for prosperity and the common good. Quitt himself displays a certain ambivalence towards this 'irrational' impulse, he is both afraid of and attracted by it. This is the same ambivalence we saw in Wunschloses Unglück, and which we will initially see in Gregor Keuschnig in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. Through Paula Tax, however, Handke again relativises the relevance of such desires: 'Daß Sie auf sich so bestehen, das macht Sie verdächtig. Sie haben kein Geschichtsbewußtsein, sind mir zu abendländisch' (U 38). Previously, the qualifications had been within the realm of the actual possibility of stepping out of a fully integrated, role-playing existence. Now, the question is one of the historical desirability and compatibility with the modern world.

Quitt and Tax are seen to be juxtaposed in their perception of the world. Tax accuses Quitt of a superficial

perception of the world, of only seeing how things appear without penetrating towards the causes: 'Statt die Ursachen zu nennen, machen Sie sich lustig über die Sachen' (U 42). Quitt replies: 'Und Sie: vor lauter Ursachen kümmern Sie sich nicht mehr um die Erscheinungen. Statt der Sachen sehen Sie von vornherein nur Ursachen' (U 42). Quitt then extends this to his own personality: 'Wenn Sie mich jetzt ansehen, nehmen Sie bitte einmal mich wahr, und nicht meine Ursachen' (U 42). Tax' mode of perception, her reliance upon strict causality as the structuring element of reality, blinds her, according to Quitt, to the 'true nature' of phenomena and, more importantly, individuals. To conceptualise the world, to reduce phenomena and people to concepts and abstractions is, in Handke's eyes, to create final images of them, to rob them of their specific individuality. We saw evidence of this in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied where the narrator felt disgust at 'Begriffen, Definitionen und Abstraktionen' (KB 22). Here, Quitt is resisting such a fitting of the world into a rigid system of coherence, which excludes and denies the 'irrational element: 'Gibt es bei dir keine Sekunde ohne Schema?' (U 47). Quitt's subsequent resolution not to join the price cartel but to allow his 'irrationalism' its head is however two-sided. He celebrates the decision - 'Ich werde mein altmodisches Ich-Gefühl als Produktivmittel einsetzen' (U 55) - but the aim of the move is to ruin the others: 'Ich werde mich nicht an die Absprache halten. Ich werde ihre Preise ruinieren und sie selber dazu' (U 55). Hence, the new 'irrationalism' appears as the extension of the old 'rationalism' with different means: 'Quitt's new subjectivity

also entails adhering to old style, every man for himself, capitalist free enterprise.'²⁹ As such, his actions only serve to confirm Hans' early statement that the basic drive to make capital out of and exploit his alienation from the 'rationality' of the world was inescapable for Quitt. In the moment of the decision for 'irrationality' Handke is reducing yet again the power of such a decision. He shows how the decision and the reasons for it are intimately linked to Quitt's former role as a businessman. He shows 'wie die ganz auf Kapital und Besitz ausgerichteten Interessen die Persönlichkeitsstruktur bis in den privatesten Bereich hinein deformieren' (U 2).

Quitt cannot escape the mode of thinking of the 'rational' entrepreneur. The sense of the sovereign, independent, 'irrational' individual, which he wants to cultivate within himself and in the way others look at him, is that of a former time, anachronistic, with little relevance or connection with a modern reality. This is underlined by the stage direction after the decision: 'Quitt trommelt sich auf die Brust und stößt den Tarzanschrei aus' (U 55). This is primitive individualism, belonging to the jungle, out of time and out of place. Quitt's role is not to be escaped merely by a decision, because his identity, consciousness and the range of possible decisions open to him in the first place are a function of that role:

Der Witz des Stückes besteht aber darin, daß es auf das individuelle Meinen gar nicht ankommt: ganz gleich, ob Quitt nur spielt oder es ernst und ehrlich meint, objektiv wird alles von seiner Rolle als Unternehmer eingenommen und von dieser Rolle dirigiert. (...) Immer wieder brechen solche Minimalaktionen bei Quitt aus als Protest und Zeichen seiner Subjektivität, die sich

der Vernunft der Rolle nicht beugen will, und doch wieder in den Dienst dieser Rolle als des stärkeren Signifikanten tritt. 30

Quitt's attempts to overcome the 'rationality' and role-playing nature of the world he lives in must fail for 'er mußte sich dabei der Formen und Mittel dieser Welt bedienen und erreichte keinen wirklich anderen Zustand, sondern nur eine neue Ordnung in ihr.'³¹ Quitt cannot simply deny the historical and social contexts of his identity and consciousness.

The second half of the play deals with the results of Quitt's 'decision', its effect upon him, his attitude to others and their attitude to him. The set has changed during the interval. Instead of the realistic props of the first half there is now a giant balloon, which is slowly shrinking, a melting block of ice, a glass trough with rising dough, and a rectangle of rock, on which are written slogans, which are slowly fading. The permanence and security of the set in the first half has now given way to objects, which all emphasise the passing of time, and which actually show it to the audience, engendering an awareness of the historical nature of human existence. Quitt's business friends visit him again, and as they enter, Quitt's wife makes to leave in accordance with her former subordinate role. Quitt tries to stop her from enacting this role, but without success. His former partners resolve to be 'irrational' as well, but only in order to try and understand Quitt and then perhaps to persuade him to rejoin the cartel. But it becomes clear that for them 'irrationalis is equal to sheer violence or the shameful results of the flouting of convention. They are so assimilated within

the public, rational sphere, that, for Lutz, the greatest source of fear is 'daß ich die Rechnung zu bezahlen vergesse' (U 68), the non-fulfilment of his duty as a consumer. They try to persuade Quitt to change his mind about the cartel. Koerber-Kent attempts to win him back by suggesting the fear of death in him; von Wullnow goes through the pretence of giving up the search for a higher standard of living, and proposes only making 'Produkte für den Umweltschutz (...) So könnte alles wie früher sein' (U 77). Lutz presents him with a report of what he has done and what it means to Lutz, and attempts to make him feel shame by implying wounded honour and sadness at the decay in 'values': 'Woran soll man sich noch halten, wenn der da unsere Preise zerstört, und damit unser vernünftiges System? Was für eine Zeit ist das? Was gilt eigentlich noch?' (U 82). Tax tries to influence him through her sex appeal, but none of these attempts work.

Quitt is now left alone with his wife and theatrical effects underline his state of mind. In complete contrast to the modern city, which still forms the backdrop despite the changes in props, we are presented with sunshine and clouds: 'Zikadenzirpen. Weit weg Hundegebell. Das Meeresrauschen. Ein Kind schreit etwas im Wind. Ferne Sonntagsglocken' (U 91). For a moment the stage is transformed into another place, a place where nature is emphasised, a place from which the modern city with all its demands and the constraints of a public, socialised existence are absent: a setting for Quitt's consciousness, for the fact that his life is now, in Hans' words, 'poetisch' (U 59). But this is firstly only momentary, and secondly decidedly

theatrical. In keeping with the new props on stage, 'ein Flugzeuggeräusch, sehr nah, das langsam leiser wird' (U 91) hauls them back into the twentieth century. Quitt's position within time and history is inescapable. The only course for the fulfilment of an anachronistic consciousness is a step out of time, i.e. death. Quitt realises this when he remarks to Kilb: 'Mein Selbstbewußtsein ist das Bewußtsein von einem Haufen Unrat in einem unendlichen leeren Raum. (...) Ich weiß, daß meine Zeit vorbei ist' (U 96). Kilb confirms this: 'Sehr richtig. Sie sind anachronistisch, Herr Quitt, wie der Marschtritt Ihrer Seele jetzt' (U 96).

Nevertheless, Quitt still feels justified in his 'altmodisches Ich-Gefühl' (U 55) and laments the state of the modern world as he sees it, its automatic functioning and predictability, even in the realm of the sub-conscious, the realm of dreams. Everything has been systematised, nothing is secret, but carries within it its own interpretation and order: 'Selbst die Träume träumen sich von vornherein so, daß sie auslegbar sind' (U 97). And yet for all his resistance to the world, Quitt realises that he is firmly entrenched within it, within the rigidity of a public existence: 'Ich stecke immer noch tief in meiner Rolle' (U 98). This, indeed, is seen to be the general state of affairs: 'Kaum einer sieht so aus, als ob er noch aus der Rolle fallen könnte' (U 98). Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung is to attempt a restoration of the importance of dreams in revealing and breaking through the rigidity of the role. In that novel Keuschnig subsequently sees the world as a 'secret' to be discovered and experienced anew.

Quitt's own attempt to break out of the 'rationality'

of the world he inhabits fails, and at the end of the play he realises his true nature as a product of that very system. Using the theatrical image of masks as an illustration, he maintains initially of himself: 'Außen hielten die Muskeln eine tote Haut fest, dann folgte eine taube Schicht nach der anderen, nur im tiefsten Innern, wo ich hätte sein sollen, zuckte es noch ein wenig und war noch ein bißchen feucht von mir' (U 98). Quitt still maintains here that there is something deep down inside him, which is still inalienably him, despite his full integration within the role-playing, public world. This remnant of individualism is seen to be a delusion in the end, for 'diese tote Haut, das war schon mein wahres Gesicht' (U 98):

Quitt cannot become any more than a "phantom" of himself, one who suddenly notices that he no longer has anything to do with his face. Quitt's quest ends with the discovery that his reality is defined by his fictions, that his very essence is nothing but role. 32

Integration into the 'rational' twentieth century world means an acceptance of the nature of this world, an acceptance of the tenuous hold we have over our own identities, an acceptance of the pressures and constraints of a socialised existence, and the role of the mass media in the formation of consciousness. For Quitt, the totally integrated man is the one who hears inner voices still, the content of which has however changed. No longer are they 'religiöse Floskeln (...) oder Ein-Satz-Philosophien' but 'Filmtitel, Schlagzeilen, Werbesprüche' (U 101). Tax had recognised earlier the importance of advertising in the promotion of 'rationality', so that the consumer could feel 'at home' in the world of consumer objects:

Für mich ist die Werbung die einzige materialistische Poesie. Als anthropomorphes System befreundet sie uns

wieder mit den uns durch die Ideologien entfremdeten Dingen. Sie beseelt die Warenwelt und vermenschlicht sie, so daß wir uns in ihr zu Hause fühlen können. (U 40)

This process was demonstrated earlier in the play in fact when Quitt was remembering his childhood. His memories expressed themselves in terms of the different advertising placards. The world of consumerism had become the yardstick by which his own history was evaluated and expressed:

Kürzlich fuhr ich durch die Vorstadtstraße, in der ich früher täglich gegangen war. Da sah ich eine alte Litfaßsäule wieder. Damals war ich öfters drum herumgegangen und hatte alles gelesen. Jetzt war die Säule fast leer, nur ein Plakat noch drauf, mit Reklame für eine Trockenmilch, die es gar nicht mehr gibt. Er hebt die Arme. Im langsamen Vorbeifahren sah ich in Erinnerung die Plakate aller vergangenen Schokoladetafeln, Zahncremen und Wahlen, und in diesem milden Moment der Erinnerung bekam ich ein tiefes Gefühl für das, was Geschichte ist. (U 15)

The process of integration into the 'rationality' and values of this external world is seen by Quitt at the end of the play to be unavoidable. There is no escape from the encroachment of outer world on inner world, for 'während die einen Monster entzaubert werden, rülpfen vor dem Fenster schon die nächsten' (U 102).

Quitt does attempt one final act of defiance and resistance: he kills Kilb, who, although professing to be an opponent of the system, - 'der Schrecken der Aufsichtsräte, der Hanswurst aller Hauptversammlungen, die Zecke im Nabel der Wirtschaft mit dem Lästigkeitswert 100' (U 11) -, is in fact a parasite on this system, dependent upon its existence for his own. But this release and relief is short-lived and really no triumph at all as the belching of the 'next monsters' sounds 'durch den ganzen Raum' (U 103). Quitt cannot come to terms with this unstoppable process, he cannot come to terms with the unceasing encroachment of

the public on the private. The only way to avoid the tension and conflict is death.

Quitt's death, as a statement of his individualism, denies any progress in the resolution of this conflict between public and private. Indeed, the tension between the two is an invalid one in the play as the private, individualistic side of Quitt is seen to be an anachronism. Handke has maintained this throughout the play. We have already mentioned several examples of the way he relativises the outbursts of Quitt's 'irrationalism' within the play. There are other instances where the theatricality of Quitt's stepping out of his role is emphasised. At one point, Quitt 'schlägt sich theatralisch an die Stirn' (U 30). Later, after an argument between Quitt and Tax, there follows a scene of exaggerated wooing, during which 'sie verfolgt ihn theatralisch' (U 43). But perhaps the greatest condemnation of Quitt's individualism comes in the reading of the extract from Stifter's Der Hagestolz.

This reading takes place a few moments before Quitt's decision to break the price cartel. In the passage the grandfather advises Victor to use his life to the full, to develop his self to the utmost limits so that his achievements and his children, and thereby part of him, can 'live on' after his death. The story appeals to Quitt and he looks back on the nineteenth century as a time when there was 'memory' and 'yearning' for what he calls 'Weltgefühle' (U 53-4). Although these no longer existed, people were able to play them out and 'immerhin glaubte man, daß es das gab, was man spielte, oder daß es möglich war' (U 54). The difference now is that the 'playing' Quitt indulges in,

the whole 'business life', is an artificial construction to cover up 'die Jauche der vergangenen Jahrhunderte' (U 54) inside Quitt: 'Auf einmal fällt mir ein, daß ich etwas spiele, das es gar nicht gibt, und das ist der Unterschied. Das ist die Verzweiflung!' (U 54-5). But by rejecting and abandoning this 'business life', which in any case is only a delusion because he still has the same aims, Quitt only allows this 'altmodisches Ich-Gefühl' (U 55) to hold sway. The sentence about playing something which no longer exists thus has a double function. Handke also places it as the motto of the play, and it must be seen as a commentary not only within it but also outside it. It is certainly Quitt's opinion of the public existence of the entrepreneurs, but it is also Handke's commentary in turn upon Quitt's outmoded 'irrationalism'. Quitt's falling out of his role is just an extension of the playing of roles, and a continuance of the aims of the 'business life'. He cannot escape his identity as the entrepreneur and so he must destroy himself:

Hermann Quitt, das Noch-Individuum, darin das "Fossil", verkraftet die "Entpersonifizierung" nicht, verkraftet nicht, daß er nur noch Vertreter einer Klasse (Unternehmer) sein soll und nicht mehr "ich, ich, ich". Doch die Alternative (i.e. 'irrationalism', M.L.) bleibt negative Utopie. Quitt weiß, daß er nicht zurück kann, er postuliert nicht Reaktion. 33

Handke 'signs and seals' this condemnation of Quitt's action in the final moments of the play. Writing about the end, one critic remarks: 'Die "Lösung" ist allein - hierin bekundet das Stück seine Verwandtschaft mit der Tragödie - der Tod.'³³ Certainly, the pathos of the individual's stand against an inescapable fate is the stuff of the conventional tragedy. But Handke does not allow pathos or catharsis here.

Not only is the form of the suicide comic, but Quitt has four attempts at it before he finally succeeds. The depiction of the act of suicide becomes one long dissipation of its tragic potential.

Handke also makes the invalidity of Quitt's decision in favour of an 'irrational', private existence clear through the character of the servant Hans. Hans is shown to use Quitt's experiences for himself. At the beginning of the play there are obvious contrasts between Hans and Quitt. Not only is one the servant and the other master, but this brings with it differing degrees of consciousness. Hans, pondering on his own situation, reveals himself to be similar in some respects to Handke's mother in Wunschloses Unglück. He says: 'Ich hätte gern. Aber es war nichts' (U 10). For Hans too, the notion of wishing has been excluded from his own experience. He continues: 'Wer bin ich, woher komme ich, wohin gehe ich?' (U 10). Although he tries to formulate some idea of an identity, he must concede: 'Ich kann mich an nichts von mir persönlich erinnern' (U 11). His entrapment in his role as servant is then shown in his behaviour on the entrance of Kilb, where he slips back automatically into his task of questioning new arrivals at the household, whilst being at the same time aware that this is an automatic role, about which however he can do nothing: 'Wer sind Sie, woher kommen Sie, undsoweiter' (U 11). The previous conversation with himself and the preoccupation with the question of his own individuality are laughable however: 'Mein Ernst ist immer nur der Ernst eines anderen' (U 12).

At the beginning of the second half of the play Hans wants to learn from and imitate Quitt. This has only

come about because previously he saw in Quitt 'nicht den Menschen, sondern den Konzernherrn' (U 60). Now, Quitt's life is, in Hans' words, 'poetisch (...) Und die Poesie schafft ein Machtgefühl, das niemanden unterdrückt - vielmehr uns Unterdrückten die Freiheit vortanzt' (U 59). Here we have, in Hans' desire to emulate and imitate Quitt, the situations of Kaspar's original sentence and Das Mündel will Vormund sein again. But, whereas in that piece the ward's progress to independence and 'emancipation' culminated in the performance of an essentially 'senseless' action, - which was in any case based upon a previous action by the guardian -, here Hans does achieve some change. Later he says: 'Hiermit gebe ich wenigstens die Änderung meiner Welt bekannt (...) ich werde zum Menschen' (U 94-5). Hans does seem to have progressed in some way, but as he then proceeds to punch the balloon, which has taken the place of the sandbag in the first half, we realise that he has only progressed within the limits of the master/servant relationship. The signs are that he has not broken out, but rather taken over Quitt's role. This would seem to be confirmed by a letter Handke wrote to Horst Zankl, the director of the premiere in Zurich:

Lass, wenn Quitt nicht mehr aufsteht, eine paradiesische Musik erklingen, nichts Trauriges jedenfalls, und Quitts Frau und den Hans beschwingt im Hintergrund (!) über die Bühne tanzen. Wichtig dabei ist, daß sie von dem liegenden Quitt keine Notiz nehmen - sonst wird das albern psychologisch. 34

Schlueter is wrong then to see some hope in Hans remaining alive. She claims that the 'survival of Hans, the proletarian, would suggest some hope of a return to an age when the integration of man and his environment was still possible'³⁵, but the only 'environment' Hans is integrated

into is that of his former master; his 'emancipation' is only a change of position within the same structure: 'Hans' "Emanzipation" (...) besteht in der äffischen Nachahmung seines Herrn und Meisters; seine neuerworbene "Freiheit" gipfelt darin, in ihm nicht mehr den Konzernherrn, sondern "den Menschen" zu sehen - das heißt in der vollständigen Demontage von politischem Bewußtsein.'³⁶

Quitt fails in his attempt to break out of his normative, 'rational' role as an entrepreneur within advanced capitalism. Such is the all-pervading nature of this role and its effect upon his inner world, that any resistance to it takes on the ambiguous value of also being an extension of it. In any case, the pure 'irrationalism' Quitt tries to adopt is seen as an anachronism in the modern world. And yet, the search for a mode of existence which can resist the final images of the world, the search for 'das hoffnungsbestimmte poetische Denken, das die Welt immer wieder neu anfangen läßt', is for Handke 'der Grund des Selbstbewußtseins, mit dem ich schreibe'.³⁷

Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung and Die linkshändige Frau are two texts then, which attempt to explore an emancipation from the rigidity of a role, from the stagnation of perception and experience. Handke advances in the latter of these texts from the position he had achieved in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied towards an actual depiction of such emancipation, but, as we shall see, the 'moment of true feeling' is presented as a mystical experience rather than a concrete change arising from a confrontation with specific social forces.

iii) Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung

This rigidity and stagnation of perception and experience referred to above is depicted by Handke in the poem 'Leben ohne Poesie', written some two years before the publication of the novel. In this poem the writer addresses the feelings of orderedness and inflexibility of his life. The title contrasts this ordered life in the Taunus, where Handke was living before his move to Paris, and where the later work Die linkshändige Frau is also set, with the notion of 'poetry'. This does not refer solely to the literary product, but more generally to the lack of 'rationality', conceptualisation and strict hierarchies of perception and experience, which Handke understands to be the barriers to his idea of 'poetic thought' as outlined in the speech on the acceptance of the Büchner prize. There are clearly also links between this poem and the play Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus, where Quitt attempts, in the end unsuccessfully, to escape from such a life. In the poem the writer feels out of time and out of place:

Ich lebte in den Tag hinein und zum Tag hinaus
hatte Augen für nichts. 38

Such is the order of the world, as it appears to the writer, that it seems without movement or fluidity, as constricting as a straitjacket:

In den Zeitungen stand alles schon schwarz auf weiß
und jede Erscheinung erschien von vornherein
als ein Begriff (...)
Söldner hatten sich in die Sprache verirrt und
hielten jedes Wort besetzt
erpreßten sich untereinander
indem sie die Begriffe als Lösungsworte
gebrauchten
und ich wurde immer sprachloser 39

With this increasing speechlessness comes a denial of expression and a denial of imagination, as the writer's consciousness stagnates as well:

In dieser eintönig strahlenden Herbstwelt
ist mir auch das Schreiben unsinnig
vorgekommen
Alles drängte sich so auf daß ich phantasielos
wurde
Vor der äußeren Pracht der Natur gab es keine
Vorstellung von etwas anderem mehr
und in den täglich gleichen Gesamteindrücken
rührte mich keine Einzelheit 40

This is the classic situation of 'Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt', where outer world influences and ultimately determines inner world, and where this inner world in turn influences and determines the way we see, the meaning we attribute to reality:

Die Erscheinungen der Wirklichkeit, die im Bewußtsein Empfindungen auslösen und auf die der Einzelne mit seinem Bewußtsein reagiert, verschwinden aus dem Wahrnehmungsbereich, wenn das Bewußtsein nur mehr auf Vorformulierungen von Wirklichkeit, auf begriffliche Regelsysteme anspricht; die Wirklichkeit ist nicht mehr erfahrbar, das Bewußtsein wird abgestumpft, unempfindlich. 41

In 'Leben ohne Poesie' it is eventually the act of writing, which, once regained, can open up this reality through its 'poetic' engagement with it. At first, writing only brings with it the self-accusation of 'Speedy Gonzales der Begriffe'⁴², but it eventually induces 'eine poetische Lust auf die Welt'⁴², which enables phenomena to be seen and experienced without **already** fitting them into a ready-made image of reality. This subversion of the rigidity of the world through writing causes the writer then to be much more positive in his attitude to life:

Ich schrieb richtig MIT
sagte lang Verschwiegendes
und dachte dann wörtlich
'So jetzt kann das Leben wieder weitergehen' (...)
Wie stolz bin ich auf das Schreiben gewesen! 43

Handke describes in this poem a similar life to that which Keuschnig comes to see as his own in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. But the difference between the two is that in the poem the writer is aware of the nature of his life, and through conscious action on his own behalf, namely writing, he confronts this life and, so we are led to believe, changes it. In the novel, Keuschnig has to be subjected to the device of the dream in order to jolt him sufficiently out of his former life, so much has he internalised its values and aims. Equally, any change in Keuschnig just seems to happen to him - the novel abounds with such phrases as 'auf einmal' or 'plötzlich' preceding 'significant' moments - without any action on his part, other than walking around Paris and wishing for a change. This lack of action in the novel means that Keuschnig's change takes place very much within his 'inner world' and, as was the case with the narrator in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, is always only ever asserted or resolved. This novel too breaks off at just that point, where Keuschnig armed with his new resolutions, re-enters society.

Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung would seem to be a fictional exposition of the aesthetic programme of the Büchner prize speech. The main figure, Gregor Keuschnig, is subjected to an experience - he dreams of having murdered an old woman -, which throws him out of the normal run of things, and which allows the world eventually 'to begin anew'. This 'irrational' encroachment on his otherwise public, 'rational' life - Keuschnig is a bureaucrat, a press attaché at the Austrian embassy in Paris - deprives him of the feeling that his life is in any way genuine or that it contains 'sense'. The dream - described as a 'Ruck' -

destroys the public edifice of confidence and coherence around Keuschnig and allows his inner world to break out of the constraints the outer world has placed upon it. This public life becomes then merely a game or pretence, 'eine Vortäuschung' to be lived 'der Form nach'.⁴⁴ In his dislocation Keuschnig becomes the embodiment of one of the mottoes of the volume Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat: '"Somewhere I lost connection...".⁴⁵ His situation is also anticipated by another of the poems in that volume, 'Die Sinnlosigkeit und das Glück'.

In this poem the poetic 'man' is lost at the beginning in the 'no-man's-land' of reality, where coherence is failing, where it is neither light nor dark, where the eyes neither close nor open. The feelings of the loss of coherence, of loss of 'sense', of 'senselessness' within this twilight zone are a prelude however to the 'happiness' of the poem's title, a state where the subject no longer feels the need to subject the world to sense, a system of meaning. For the attainment of this state, however, 'der geheimnisvolle Ruck'⁴⁶ is necessary, 'oder der wilde Entschluß, ein Leben nach der/ eigenen Vorstellung zu führen'⁴⁶, both elements in the story of the change in Gregor Keuschnig. Similarly, the existence of the state of 'happiness' is short-lived, as indeed with Keuschnig it is only an 'hour of true feeling'. The subject in the poem goes on to attack all those, who adhere to this 'Sinn-Theater (...) Weltbild-Monopol-Truppe'⁴⁷ and threatens violence against them, the reaction of someone who, in his helplessness, can neither understand the concrete social forces behind the production of the final images of the world, nor appreciate

that changing things does not necessarily mean individualistic acts of terror, but rather organised confrontation of these forces through political action. But the individual terror is a strong feature of Keuschnig's life after his dream, particularly in his relationships with women.

The moment of change in the poem is marked by an awareness of the notion of having to feign or pretend that life is still normal. Everything - 'das Gehen (...) der Blick, mit dem er den Horizont am/Ende der Straße betrachtet'⁴⁸ - is 'markiert'. The new 'senselessness', which is covered up by role-playing and displaying an outer mask in public life, is seen to be comparable with a regaining of a painful mode of existence experienced before only in childhood. The reference to the situation in Kaspar becomes clear here as Handke maintains that it is not a case now of 'der Sinn ging verloren', but rather that 'senselessness' 'ist wiedergefunden'.⁴⁹ This is the same kind of lack of order, of totally 'private consciousness' with which Kaspar came on to the stage. In this state, there is no plan or system, because there are no final images of the world to fit into such a plan or system: the final images of the world are perceived as being constantly destroyed by the liberated consciousness' experience of reality:

allmählich malt man sich diese verschiedenen
Frauen
schon als etwas Mythisches aus
- altes Schluckauf seinstrunkener Poeten -:
als eine Frau mit Wasser in den Beinen einsteigt,
mühseliger als die andern,
und heilsam das leichtfertige BILD zerstört... 50

The initial ambivalence about the jolt into 'senselessness'

or 'nonsense' is soon dispersed:

Der Gegensatz zur Sinnlosigkeit ist nicht der
Sinn -
man braucht nur keinen Sinn mehr,
sucht auch keinen philosophischen Sinn für den
Unsinn 51

The result of this is that the phenomena of the world are no longer reduced to their place within a system of coherence, because the 'nonsense' is no longer feared: 'Weil die Angst vor dem Unsinn vorbei ist,/ brauchen sie keine Ordnung mehr.'⁵² This then leads to a 'direct' way of seeing, without the mediation of a system of interpretation: 'Weil der Unsinn vorbei ist, ist der Anblick/ zugleich schon der Eindruck geworden.'⁵² A similar state of unmediated, 'direct' experience was noted, as we saw, by the narrator in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied: 'Erleichtert schaute ich, in einem paradiesischen Zustand, in dem man nur sehen wollte, und in dem einem das Sehen schon ein Erkennen war' (KB 36). That state was also induced by an inexplicable jolt out of the dominant perception patterns: 'Dann belebte mich ihr Anblick und gab mir einen Ruck' (KB 35). But, precisely the inexplicability of such moments and their lack of connection with the external world - they seem to happen 'magically' within the inner world of the observer -, marks them as avoiding and transcending these dominant perception patterns.

The acceptance of 'nonsense' as a prelude to 'happiness' is the main theme of Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. Keuschnig is thrown into 'nonsense' through his dream, and Handke explores whether he can use this to achieve 'happiness'. Stated as such, it is clear that Keuschnig, in the terms we applied to the two previous works, is

divorced from a total public existence defined by external factors, and confronted with the potential of the private sphere. Keuschnig's repressed inner world, in all its brutality and sexual aggression, breaks through the façade of respectability and reliability which contains it. The difference, however, between Keuschnig and Quitt is that for Keuschnig the dialectic of public and private still holds because he is in contact, at the beginning of the novel, with the world, the change takes place in him within the context of further, though altered, contact with that world, and at the end of the novel he is seen preparing to re-enter the world, wishing for a new job and longing to meet others. The abstracted, anachronistic quality of the manifestations of the tension between public and private in Quitt are no longer present here.

Unlike Quitt, Keuschnig makes no conscious decision to break with his public existence, but rather the 'Ruck', the dream of having murdered someone, happens independently of his wishes. The dream is also given no further explanation in the novel, although clearly violence and aggression towards women is a feature of Keuschnig's relationships with both his wife and his girlfriend. Manfred Jurgensen describes the dream as a 'Bild einer gewaltsamen Distanzierung von einer vorgefaßten Gewohnheitswelt'⁵³, whilst Irene Wellershoff attempts to contextualise its 'meaning' within general twentieth century experience: 'Mensch und Welt werden nicht mehr durch eine Totalitätserfahrung in eine harmonische Beziehung gesetzt. Der Sinnverlust im Alltagsleben leitet sich nämlich letzten Endes aus dem Verschwinden der allgemeinen

verbindlichen Weltdeutungssysteme in unserer Gesellschaft her.⁵⁴ In spite of these attempts, however, to give the dream further 'meaning' and explanation, in the novel it remains very much in the background after the first few pages. It is mentioned again towards the end of the first chapter: 'Keuschnig traute sich alles zu, sogar einen Lustmord. Endlich gestand er sich ein, daß der Mord an der alten Frau im Traum ein Lustmord gewesen war' (SWE 45). Momentarily the complex of problems this statement seems to open - sexual politics and manifestations of male power - are glimpsed, but Keuschnig, and Handke, avoid any further mention of them: 'Plötzlich begann der Hund des Taxifahrers ihn anzuknurren, und Keuschnig bekam Angst vor sich selber. Schnell zur Arbeit, dachte er; gutes, liebes Büro' (SWE 45). The specific issues within the dream are subsumed under a more general idea of the dream showing a break with the 'world of habit'. It becomes clear in the novel that Handke is using the dream only as a construct to manoeuvre his main figure into the position of outsider. Hence, the dream takes on a certain arbitrary quality, which is then later reproduced in the manifestations of alienation and isolation experienced by Keuschnig. Just as the dream seems to happen to him, so his feelings of discontent and dislocation often seem to have no concrete cause, to be dis- and unconnected with the society around him. This marks for Uwe Timm the artificiality of the entire novel:

Es geht Handke nicht darum, glaubwürdig, das heißt für den Leser nachvollziehbar zu beschreiben, wie es zu dieser plötzlichen Entfremdung Keuschnigs kommt, welche subjektiven und welche objektiven Faktoren dazu geführt haben, denn das auslösende Moment, der Traum, ist bloßes Konstrukt, um möglichst schnell durch die Figur Keuschnigs Isolation, Sinnlosigkeit

und Überdruß zu demonstrieren. Keuschnig ist für Handke eine Ankleidepuppe der Entfremdung. 55

Timm expresses a similar suspicion here to that we had when discussing Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, namely that Handke uses his novels to demonstrate theories or theses without bothering to integrate both fully. The overwhelming impression left then is one of artificiality and arbitrariness of the characters' experiences and actions.

For most of the rest of the novel, Keuschnig attempts to come to terms with the change the dream has caused within him. It is only towards the end of the book that he uses this change for positive effect. Initially, his attitudes are characterised by that notion of ambivalence towards the 'jolt' we also found in the two previous works. Here, however, it is much more marked, as Keuschnig has much more to lose, should the results of the acceptance of the lurch into the 'new perspective' be far-reaching. The primary result of the initial impulse is to awaken Keuschnig to the need to feign his old life in order to maintain appearances. He has strong feelings of not belonging, but realises on the other hand that he must live as before. The constraints of the social role, the public existence, still hold enough sway to maintain a partial denial of the dream's potential, even though Keuschnig realises the inescapability of his situation: 'Es war etwas passiert, das er nicht mehr rückgängig machen konnte' (SWE 9). This is described as a feeling of 'newness', of a difference, which cannot be avoided, as 'abenteuerlich' (SWE 12). Keuschnig's problem is to maintain initially a balance between the fabrication of the old, which has always existed but which has now become conscious

to him, and the exploration of the new:

Ab heute führe ich also ein Doppelleben, dachte er. Nein, gar kein Leben: weder das gewohnte, noch ein neues: denn das gewohnte werde ich nur vortäuschen, und das neue wird sich erschöpfen müssen im Vortäuschen des gewohnten. Ich fühle mich hier nicht mehr am Platz, kann mir aber überhaupt nicht vorstellen, irgendwo anders am Platz zu sein; kann mir aber nicht vorstellen, so weiterzuleben wie jetzt, aber auch nicht, zu leben, wie jemand anderer gelebt hat oder lebt. (SWE 13)

The novel progresses via the constant tension between these two conflicting elements, as Keuschnig becomes more and more conscious of the change and its consequences clashing with the need to preserve the outer form of his former existence, and this former existence and the energy he expends to uphold it sabotaging his desire to live "wie ich" (SWE 13). On the one hand then, Keuschnig tries out new ways of going to work as he becomes more and more curious about the realm of possibility now open to him (SWE 15), on the other hand he experiences, in a similar incident to that of Handke's mother's visit to the doctor in Wunschloses Unglück, a strong feeling of belonging as he goes through the ritual motions of buying flowers, as he enters into an action common to a whole community. Integration within a community means he can disappear and become insignificant while at the same time accepting the constraints attendant upon such integration. Thus, he is described as 'jemand ganz Beliebiger', as 'undefinierbar', and 'zwischen diesen Leuten, die er nie kennen würde, fühlte er sich aufgenommen' (SWE 26).

His ambivalence towards his new situation is matched by his ambivalence towards others' reactions to the 'new Keuschnig'. The ambassador notices nothing different about him and Keuschnig 'war erleichtert, aber sonderbarerweise

auch enttäuscht' (SWE 21). He experiences disgust at the visit to his girlfriend, for it is 'gleich wie immer' (SWE 26), that is she behaves no differently in spite of the change in him. At this point Keuschnig still has a hold on the outer world. He is able to carry off the pretence of his former life, although this proves more and more difficult. He experiences the most alienation from the familiar episodes, for it is precisely their familiarity, which stringently dictates their need to be performed in exactly the 'right' way: 'Was sich so vertraut ereignen sollte, vollführte er als zeremonielle Vorgänge, ängstlich bedacht, nicht aus der Rolle zu fallen' (SWE 28). The completeness of the public, socialised existence and its extension into all human interaction is for Peter Pütz the theme of the novel: 'Thema ist nun nicht mehr allein das Zeichensystem der Sprache und Wahrnehmung, sondern der Rollenzwang des gesamten Daseins, angefangen bei Herkunft, Ehe und Beruf und endend in abstoßender Alltäglichkeit.'⁵⁶ Certainly, the accent on Keuschnig's efforts to maintain the appearance of the public role-bearer continues throughout most of the novel, but becomes less and less frequent in the narration as the depiction of Keuschnig's exploration of the consequences of the dream becomes dominant. On the way, however, Handke provides examples of keen observation of the way we play games or give signs in order to show that we are integrated, ordered and therefore, in a society of rigid power structures even in our personal lives, harmless: 'Ein Polizist stand an der Ecke in einem Schilderhäuschen und ließ eine Trillerpfeife an einer langen Schnur um seinen Finger kreisen.

Gut, daß Keuschnig jetzt niesen mußte. Das war doch ein Harmlosigkeitsbeweis, oder?' (SWE 63). A short time later Keuschnig observes the guards at the Elysee Palace: 'Aber als der Soldat ihn plötzlich fixierte, schaute er sofort auf die Uhr' (SWE 68). He also exploits group behavioural patterns to maintain his inconspicuousness: 'Die Fernsehlampen gingen aus, und kaum hatte er sich, indem er die letzte Gemeinsamkeit ausnützte, mit den anderen die Hand gegen die Augen gedrückt, war der Präsident der Republik verschwunden' (SWE 76).

These manoeuvres are all within the public sphere however. In his private existence Keuschnig has long passed the point of no return, has long taken the step into a 'new perspective' on the world. His final split comes after a visit to his girlfriend: 'Er sah alles wie zum letzten Mal (...) Es knisterte in ihm, dann stürzte alles durcheinander' (SWE 31). It is for him now a question of using the dream to attain results, for 'der Traum ist vielleicht mein erstes Lebenszeichen seit langem gewesen. Er hat mich warnen sollen. Er wollte mich umdrehen, wie jemanden, der lange auf der falschen Seite gestanden hat' (SWE 35).

The notion of dreams and 'awakening' to new experience reminds us of the framework of sleeping and awakening in Der Ritt über den Rodensee. In that play we saw that the implication was that we live and speak mostly as if in a dream, not conscious of what we are really doing or saying, for such things have become automatic functions of social life. Keuschnig reiterates this position: 'Ich möchte die schlafwandlerischen Sicherheiten für den

Wachzustand vergessen. Die Träume zu vergessen, war immer leicht. Die Sicherheiten zu verlieren, wird anstrengend sein, weil mir täglich dieselben Sicherheiten begegnen werden – die doch nur andre mir vorgeträumt haben' (SWE 35). The statement also documents the difficulties surrounding such an isolated, individual attempt to break out of social forces. The dream adopts a function within the re-evaluation of his existence, within the attempt to discard the artificial ordering of the world, its fabricated 'coherence', within the attempt to allow the world to begin anew: 'Ich werde die Sicherheiten dadurch vergessen, daß ich mich an einen Lebenstraum erinnern werde. Sagen wir, der Traum der letzten Nacht sei mein Lebenstraum gewesen' (SWE 35). Keuschnig resolves here to head towards emancipation, as if such a move could be decided upon individually. Hence any change within him is registered and expressed only by him, its assertion must be believed by the reader:

Ob Keuschnig nun beim Klicken eines Kugelschreibers zusammenfährt und denkt, die Katastrophe ist da, oder ob er in einem Restaurant das Gefühl hat, die Zukunft sei erst mal gesichert – die Emotion wird gegenüber ihrem äußeren Anlaß zur bloßen Behauptung, man kann sie nur noch glauben. 57

Reality becomes for Keuschnig a 'narcissistic hall of mirrors'⁵⁸ in which he experiences alienation or enthusiasm according to his private disposition. The novel becomes the story of 'individuelle Selbstverwirklichung (...) Selbstbestimmung (...) das Postulat einer individuellen Bestimmungskraft'⁵⁹ against specific social forces and pressures. It is at this point, as Peter Schneider rightly maintains, that any comparison of this novel with Kafka's Die Verwandlung must stop:

In Kafkas Geschichte ist Gregor Samsa das Objekt des Ekels. Die anderen sind es, die sich voll Abscheu von ihm abwenden und gleichzeitig ihre Betroffenheit von Gregors Verwandlung verraten. In Handkes Geschichte ist es Keuschnig, der sich voll Ekel und Abscheu von der Welt abwendet. Zu Beginn der Geschichte erscheint der Ekel als Merkmal eines bestimmten Menschen in einer bestimmten Lage. Im Lauf der Erzählung wird der Ekel zu einer existenziellen Kategorie. 60

Schneider is right to maintain here that Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis is linked to a specific social situation. The 'change' in Gregor Keuschnig results not from his position within a particular set of social relations, but from his position in society as such: 'Das Leiden und die Irritation des Individuums resultieren nicht aus einer konkreten Gesellschaft, sondern entspringen der Gesellschaft an sich.'⁶¹ In Kaspar and Der Ritt über den Bodensee it was language itself, rather than its particular historical manifestation, which caused alienation; in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and Das Umfallen der Kegel von einer bauerlichen Kegelbahn it was the fact that perception and experience were mediated at all that seemed to cause problems for Bloch and the two Austrians; in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung it is, in spite of the more differentiated analysis in Wunschloses Unglück, society and a socialised public existence per se which eventually bring about Keuschnig's disgust and alienation. It should be no surprise then, that if the 'problem' is perceived on this general, abstract level, then any 'emancipation' can only take place on a similar plane, through individual, private assertion and realisation.

This course of action is not an easy one for Keuschnig. Beforehand, his future had been mapped out. In a similar way to Handke's mother, he had no fear of the future,

because he had no dimension of an unknown future within his life. Now he is only aware of the potential within the future, but without any concrete idea of how to realise it, and this initially brings feelings of hopelessness (SWE 36). The effects of the jolt into 'nonsense' begin to manifest themselves through the view of the outsider, who can see no coherence in the world, who cannot understand that people can still talk to each other from one moment to the next, who has no feeling for continuity or consistency of events, for this would imply that things remain as they are, whereas he is a denial of this. Others appear to the outsider as 'affektiert (...) sorglos (...) jede Miene so sommerlich aufgekratzt' (SWE 39), as he 'sees through' their poses and roles. Everyone appears as if in a play, which is 'gekünstelt' (SWE 40). In this particular respect Keuschnig is in the tradition of the narrators in Camus' La Chute or Sartre's Les Mots. Where he differs, particularly from the lawyer in La Chute, is in his eventual re-entry into the world.

Complementary to this increase in insight into the artificiality of existence in the external world is an increasing confidence in his own ability to form his own world, to make positive use of what he has gained, although by and large this only remains on the level of assertion within his inner world. Nevertheless, the primacy of self-definition gradually establishes itself, whereby Keuschnig experiences himself as having more and more control over his life. In one instance, he reacts mockingly initially to an old man and woman because they merely fill the public image of an old man and woman. Then he

softens and says to himself: 'Du bist nicht die Welt' (SWE 43). However, increasing confrontation with images of the way things always are - 'der übliche Hund auf dem Beifahrersitz des Taxis (...) altbekanntes Dieselmotorgeräusch' (SWE43) - causes him to re-assert his control and the personal inevitability of acknowledging it:

Doch, er war jetzt die Welt, und seine Versuche, das zu vertuschen, erlebte er auf einmal als Bild: er legte immer wieder einen angebissenen Apfel so zu den anderen in einen Korb, daß er heil aussehen sollte - aber der Apfel rollte jedesmal zur Seite, und die angebissene Stelle kam nach oben. (SWE 43)

He rejoices in this new freedom of action, but, as with later moments, it is only short-lived, and he soon longs for the security and anonymity of his office job as his ambivalence towards the change in him declares itself again.

In his office he is engaged in a report about French films of Austria and concludes that Austria is presented as a country, in which everything is 'AUSWENDIG gelernt (...) WIE MAN LEBEN VORTÄUSCHTE' (SWE 49-50). Gradually however his new found inner world takes this over, as he questions the authenticity of these opinions. The outsider can no longer lose himself in work, which pretends to have some general, public validity, especially as he is attempting to resist such final images. Similarly, he cannot bring himself security by ordering the objects on his desk, for such order and the security arising from it are only a veneer upon the underlying 'nonsense': 'Ich rede mir damit eine Sicherheit ein, die es gar nicht gibt' (SWE 52). Keuschnig's 'task' now is to learn to be able to accept and live with this 'nonsense'.

At this point in the novel Keuschnig's need for a new

approach to the world, for an acceptance of its lack of coherence and systematisation, manifests itself for the first time outwardly towards another person. From his window he sees a girl watering plants, rushes to her office and they have sex on the floor. Afterwards, in spite of the spontaneous, impersonal nature of this encounter, he feels very close to her: 'Er konnte sie selbstverständlich anschauen, ohne Anstrengung; ohne die Angst, sich zu verraten (...) Er hatte vor ihr kein Versteckspiel nötig, nie mehr (...) Sie hatten voreinander keine Geheimnisse, aber ein gemeinsames Geheimnis vor den andern' (SWE 55). Unlike the rest of the world, he does not need to concentrate on the outer form, the appearance of his life. With the girl, his inner world is transformed into action, and his actions are the result of the externalisation of the momentary rush of sexual urge without the hindrances of social constraint or morality. Keuschnig's consciousness becomes his world, private becomes public. The encounter with her is in the totally 'direct' present, as if the world were new (although of course awareness of the 'importance' or 'difference' of the moment presupposes that the world is not new), with no system or order. This experience is short-lived, however, as the structures of his super-ego assert themselves in turn. The shame Keuschnig subsequently feels arises out of a comparison between what is and what ought to be, between his feelings of emptiness and lack of warmth after the encounter and the socialised feeling that he should remember it as something better. Thus Keuschnig orders the experience within a framework of morality outside the notion of a 'direct' present, and the

moment of true feeling is lost.

That instances of this feeling are of necessity, with regard to the shortness of Keuschnig's new attitude, short-lived is implied in the title of the novel. Firstly, it implies that such feeling can be termed 'true', a notion based upon a belief in the primacy of the subject's self-awareness, for who, otherwise, could designate the feeling to be 'true' or 'false'? Secondly, any attempt to attain this state can only be momentary before 'false' feeling presumably hauls the subject back into its grip. This bears a similarity to a short essay 'Eine Zwischenbemerkung über meine Angst', where Handke writes: 'Sehr selten gelingt das vernünftige Glück, das von der Umwelt nicht abschließt, sondern für sie öffnet. Das wäre dann die gewünschte Existenz.'⁶² 'Angst' becomes for Keuschnig, as it is for Handke, an important aid in the re-evaluation of reality. In this essay Handke writes that it is not so much the anxiety, which is revealing, 'sondern den Zustand danach - wenn die Angst vorbei ist. Da entsteht dann ein Gefühl, des jenem vernünftigen Glück nahekommt.'⁶³ Similarly, Keuschnig uses the memory of fear to break out of the automatic feelings, in order to declare: 'Ich muß alle Gefühle neu entdecken!' (SWE 62).

This rediscovery and retention of new feelings in the world is difficult for Keuschnig, especially as he is constantly plagued by fear of death (of his old existence) at the very moment when he is, metaphorically, undergoing re-birth. He consciously steels himself against falling back and being re-integrated into his old existence: 'Jetzt nicht wieder gleich alles vergessen, dachte Keuschnig.

Dieses ganz sachlich gemeinte Abtasten habe ich heute, um sechs Uhr abends, als eine Zärtlichkeit empfunden' (SWE 69). With this longing for new feelings comes another instance of the rejection of ritual in modern life, in this case the ritual of eating and drinking and their 'Unausweichlichkeit, Vorhersehbarkeit, Sterbenslangweiligkeit, mörderische Ausschließlichkeit' (SWE 80). These ideas produce in Keuschnig a 'fremdes, ruhiges Lebensgefühl', and he then experiences what is one of the central episodes of the book. Before him he sees three objects, 'ein Kastanienblatt: ein Stück von einem Taschenspiegel: eine Kinderzopfspanne' (SWE 81). These objects 'suddenly' become for him 'Wunderdinge'. Keuschnig reacts with '"Wer sagt denn, daß die Welt schon entdeckt ist?"' (SWE 81). There are still things to be discovered in the world, so Keuschnig maintains, it is not completely parcelled up or, in the words of the Büchner prize speech, 'versiegelt'. This new feeling for the objects of the world leads to a need for other people: 'Bei dem bestärkenden Anblick der drei wunderbaren Dinge im Sand erlebte er eine hilflose Zuneigung zu allen, aus der er sich aber auch nicht helfen lassen wollte, weil sie ihm jetzt als das Vernünftige erschien' (SWE 82). Keuschnig experiences here this 'rational happiness', which opens up the world. The three objects at his feet are de-functionalised, they lose their 'meaning' within anthropocentric systems of coherence, and are 'set free'. This applies also to the experiencing consciousness, so that Keuschnig can maintain: 'Ich habe eine Zukunft! (...)' 'Ich kann mich ändern'" (SWE 82-3).

This 'emancipation' of the objects and of Keuschnig

himself here has been discussed as a central issue by almost every commentator of the novel. Handke himself has called the episode 'dieses mystische Erlebnis'⁶⁴ and has preferred to concentrate on how the experience hinders Keuschnig from coming to the aid of a North African in a bus some time later. Others have seen some symbolic value in the objects on the ground, in spite of the fact that they are supposedly 'set free' from such systems of coherence. Gustav Zürcher sees the leaf, the mirror and the child's hair slide as representing 'die Reinheit der Natur, die furchtlose Selbstbegegnung, die Unschuld der Kindheit'⁶⁵, which Mixner finds is 'wohl eine kleine Überinterpretation'.⁶⁶ Hans-Gerhard Winter makes a similar attempt to 'decode' the objects:

Das Kastanienblatt läßt sich dechiffrieren als ein Stück nicht verwerteter Natur, der Taschenspiegel als Medium der Selbstspiegelung, des Sich-selbst-Findens; die Kinderzopfspanne steht für das kindliche Verhalten zur Umwelt, das, wie es dem Helden des Buches erscheint, noch von Neugier geprägt ist und nicht vom Nutzungsprinzip. ⁶⁷

These attempts at interpreting the episode are a reaction to a general feeling of arbitrariness about it. The interpretations try to place the objects within an overall intention, they try to answer the question 'Why these particular objects?'. But, we would argue that there is no reason why Handke chose these particular objects, because their existence as particular objects is not important. What is important is only their function as devices, through which Keuschnig's 'true feeling' can be demonstrated. The objects do not cause or contribute to the 'true feeling', but rather are purely the passive objects of it. The 'true feeling' takes place magically, 'mystically', within

Keuschnig's inner world, with no reference to the outer world. It is an 'emancipation' from within, divorced from any social context or dialectic between inner and outer. Hence, its arbitrary, artificial nature, and hence the attempts by various critics to site it within some overall genuine purpose. The tenor of the episode is however only consistent with that of the dream and the descriptions of Keuschnig's disgust and alienation: they have their origins in Handke's particular subjectivity and not in any social or historical reality:

Er (Handke, M.L.) selektiert Erfahrbares im Hinblick auf Entfremdung und Verdinglichung. Resultat ist eine erstarrte Welt und eine unhistorische statische Gesellschaft. Entsprechend der aufgepappten Ideologie, kann Entfremdung auch 'künstlich' wieder aufgelöst werden, wenn Keuschnig die drei 'Wunderdinge' entdeckt: ein Kastanienblatt, ein Stück von einem Taschenspiegel und eine Kinderzopfspange. Diese 'Entwicklung' der Figur wird nicht aus psychischen Reaktionen oder dem sozialen Kontext verständlich, sie resultiert aus einem literarisch-ideologischen Kraftakt des Autors Peter Handke. 68

The story of Gregor Keuschnig progresses within the tension between public and private, with the main figure presented as gaining more and more from the change occasioned by the dream, but still being drawn back into the public sphere in his dealings with others. But, as his insights increase, so his situation becomes more desperate. He has dreams of robbing a bank and adopting a new existence to escape: 'Mit einer eigenartigen Freude erfuhr er, es gäbe keine Verjährung und er müßte als Niemand sein Leben weiterführen bis zum Tod' (SWE 113). The difficulty of integrating the new-found aspects of his private sphere into a public, social existence, of taking the step into practical emancipation is still to be confronted and overcome. That it will be overcome is indicated through

the intervention in the narrative of a detached, authorial voice - sign enough of the particular type of manipulation of 'events' alluded to by Timm: 'So begann der Tag, an dem seine Frau von ihm wegging, an dem ihm sein Kind abhanden kam, an dem er zu leben aufhören wollte und an dem schließlich doch einiges anders wurde' (SWE 113).

At the end of the poem 'Die Sinnlosigkeit und das Glück', after the acceptance of 'nonsense', the moment 'als der Unsinn nachließ und die neue Vertraut-/heit als Schmerz gefühlt wurde'⁶⁹, there enter into play the two elements of the dream and of childlike expression as positive gains in the process. Both are seen to be won in the context of the onset of a new 'vernünftige Zeit'⁷⁰, by which Handke would seem to mean the accepted state of 'nonsense' and not the former, 'rational' time as in Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus. The elements of dream and childlike expression both contain within them an 'irrational', anti-systematic potential, are both markers of a lack of subjugation to systems of coherence in the public, 'rational' world. In Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung the first element, the dream, was the initial impulse behind Keuschnig's change, and dreams feature throughout his life after the jolt into 'nonsense'. Now, the second element comes increasingly to bear as Keuschnig searches for a possible way of integrating the new-found private sphere into a public existence. He realises that his child could be a valuable source of possible change or guidance for him. At first he maintains that the child is only a burden: 'Das Kind hindert mich am Nachdenken!' (SWE 121), but then the systematisation of this thinking begins to crumble as he realises, 'aber vielleicht könnte ich gerade an dem Kind

eine neue Art des Nachdenkens erlernen?' (SWE 121). Keuschnig, through observation of the child, begins to learn from the world and not just from his own inner thoughts. The measure of the child's self-sufficiency and self-assertion in the world is set against Keuschnig's increasing inability to come to terms with the true state of his reality - the fact that his wife has left him. He tries to restore order, to manufacture 'sense', by closing doors, tidying up his flat, and finally by going to his girlfriend, but even this bastion of a former coherence in his life is now estranged from him. The crisis he reaches strengthens his resolve 'sich neu (zu) erfinden' (SWE 130). Just as the world had been 'opened up' to him in the park, so now he sees the possibility of himself being opened up anew. The way forward necessitates a convergence of public and private, for it is only through the mediation of the observation of and comparison with others (the world) that progress is achieved: 'Er wollte dazu erst einmal geduldig die anderen beobachten, weil ihm das, um sich selber neu zusammenzusetzen, notwendig schien' (SWE 130).

Keuschnig feels particular admiration for his child: 'Sie saß da, für sich allein' (SWE 131). He admires the child's ability to enjoy the most everyday of events - eating and drinking -, events which before he had derided. The child displays a naive, uncomplicated attitude to the 'simple things' in its life. Or, when a drunk begins to shout outside the restaurant, the child shows no derision, she forms no moral judgement, but is merely 'erschrocken', whilst the adults in the restaurant display 'ein schmunzeln-

des Einverständnis' (SWE 136). This encounter and contrast is productive in that Keuschnig realises, 'zum ersten Mal freute er sich, mit ihr allein zu sein' (SWE 136).

Keuschnig experiences more and more hope for the future, in the formation of which he can be creatively involved: '"Ich werde zu arbeiten anfangen. Ich werde etwas erfinden. Ich brauche eine Arbeit, in der ich etwas erfinden kann"' (SWE 140). This would produce a new future, the result of the change in attitude, a future for a person concentrating on the private - the child's 'Fürsichsein' (SWE 141) - within the public world, encompassing acceptance and assertion of self within a community. Jurgensen sees Keuschnig becoming more and more like Agnes, his daughter:

Es kommt zu dem Versprechen einer Harmonie, die das Einzelne und das Ganze, das Fürsichsein und die objektive Existenz zu vereinigen weiß. 'Keuschnig war zumute, als sei er ganz nahe daran, die Einzelheit zu entdecken, die auch alles übrige zusammenrücken ließe.' Diese neue Weltsicht, diese Neuentdeckung der Welt läßt ihn ästhetisch und moralisch zu einem Kind werden. Er identifiziert sich deshalb mehr und mehr mit seiner Tochter Agnes. 71

But this process is never presented by Handke in the novel. Instead it becomes merely a registration of images of this new hope and new existence: 'Er fühlte, daß er mächtig geworden war. Er könnte mit allen reden und ihnen Glück bringen' (SWE 148). He resolves to continually rediscover the world so that nothing is ever final and complete. Objects become objects 'for themselves' again as the world is dis-ordered by the new consciousness and loses its linguistic aspect of signs and systems. An umbrella is 'kein Hinweis auf etwas anderes mehr, sondern eine Sache für sich' (SWE 152), as it is divorced from systems of coherence.

The end of the novel then reminds us of the end of Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied. All Keuschnig's resolutions and assertions that he was changing and that he was awaiting the future with joy and hope remain only resolutions and assertions. We do not see any depiction of them within a social context. Indeed, Keuschnig fades into a certain anonymity in the last paragraph of the book as the narrative perspective turns away from his inner world to an objective third person stance. Keuschnig as an experienced character thus dissipates somewhat, and the knowledge he has gained is not integrated through action into the public sphere. Rather, the novel charts a series of beginnings exemplified by its open end of three dots. One of these beginnings is then taken up by Handke in Die linkshändige Frau. The 'emancipation' depicted there, however, is precisely this 'emancipation' from within, brought about by isolated resolutions and decisions, rather than collective action. As such, it is indicative of Handke's perception of the relationship between the individual and society as one of 'static dualism' rather than 'dialectical change'.

iv) Die linkshändige Frau

The withdrawal from the world into the self - a construct already used by Handke, as we have seen, in Die Stunde der der wahren Empfindung and to a lesser extent in Die Unvernünftigen sterben aus - features prominently in Die linkshändige Frau. Whereas for Keuschnig the moment was prompted by a dream, the irrational nature of which shook

him out of his public life, in this novel Marianne asks her husband Bruno to leave her as the result of an 'Erleuchtung'.⁷² It becomes clear from the way she expresses herself to Bruno that the fear of becoming the object of an action - his leaving her - moves her to transform herself into an active subject: '"Ich hatte auf einmal die Erleuchtung" - sie mußte auch über dieses Wort lachen -, "daß du von mir weggehst; daß du mich allein läßt. Ja, das ist es: Geh weg, Bruno. Laß mich allein"' (LF 23). Similarly, around this construct we as readers may erect explanations for such behaviour, although the text, and even more the subsequent film directed by Handke, constantly refuses to deliver psychological or sociological explanation, and even at one point makes fun of such ways of approaching reality: '"Franziska meint, Stefan sei in letzter Zeit auffällig verschlossen. Außerdem wasche er sich nicht mehr. Nach ihrer Meinung deute das darauf hin, daß..." Die Frau: "Und was meint Franziska noch?" Bruno lachte; die Frau lächelte mit' (LF 61). One commentator sees the book as being exemplary of a definitive theme of German literature of the Seventies, 'die Krise von partnerschaftlichen Bindungen und die wachsende Selbstbestimmungslust der Frauen'.⁷³ Certainly, Marianne's decision to free herself from Bruno can be sited within a movement away from what Handke himself terms 'die vorausbestimmte Biographie' and 'das vorgeträumte Leben'.⁷⁴ This stagnation within people's lives, so effectively portrayed in Wunschloses Unglück, is, in the words of one critic, 'die Einschnürung des Individuums durch das Vorgegebene, bereits allgemein Gültige'.⁷⁵ In other words,

it is an historically based phenomenon, dependent upon the development of tradition and ideology. The weakness of Die linkshändige Frau, as with other previous works, is that liberation from this 'pre-determined biography' is presented through a series of simple assertions and decisions without their incorporation into a wider social reality. Where the novel does bring Marianne back into 'society' at the end, it is in the society of friends at a private party, a rarefied, timeless atmosphere, where social hierarchy, roles and power are 'magically', yet only temporarily, transcended. Richard Critchfield points out the difficulty of the individual trying to escape from a collectively organised way of life:

(Marianne) can be viewed as the woman of the day who refuses to acquiesce to the demands of a male oriented society. At the same time, her trials and tribulations, her past and continuing dependency on males, and her use and potential abuse by them speak of the continuation of women's history with the one important exception that Marianne tries to break with that history. 76

All Handke's characters in the 'emancipatory texts' try to break with their history; but it is not just a case of an assertion or a change of mind. Such 'breaking with history' must involve concrete action as well.

Marianne and Bruno live on a faceless modern estate of owner-occupied houses on the outskirts of a big city, where everything is neat and tidy, and yet totally characterless:

In der Siedlung gingen sie an einer beleuchteten Telefonzelle vorbei, in der sich schattenhaft jemand bewegte, und bogen in eins der engen, künstlich verwinkelten Gäßchen ein, die die Siedlung querteilten. (...) Bruno fragte: "Bist du immer noch gern hier?" Die Frau: "Manchmal wünschte ich mir eine stinkende Pizzabude vor der Haustür, oder einen Zeitungsstand." (LF 16)

Marianne's self-isolation, an isolation chosen by her as opposed to one which is placed upon her by her life on the estate, appears to her as the only way to any kind of self-fulfilment, the only way to break out of the constraints of the outer world - her marriage, social obligations, roles -, which so limit and define her. Within this self-isolation she attempts to cultivate the child's attitude to the world, which so attracted Keuschmig in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, the openness, the 'Fürsichsein' (SWE 141), the protection and assertion of self within a community. June Schlueter reports that Handke saw the film of the novel very much within the terms of the attitude of the child. Marianne's decision is divorced from any historical movement, and is definitely not the expression of a feminist quest for identity, but rather of '"un retour à une autonomie un peu enfantine"'.⁷⁷ Schlueter therefore sees Marianne returning to 'a pure self, a symbolic childhood representative of a self which has not yet been subsumed by the demands of civilisation'.⁷⁸ However, it is precisely these 'demands of civilisation', that is social existence, which enter into a dialectical relationship with the individual to produce the notion of self in each person. Far from being the representative of a 'pure self', whatever that might mean, the child is an un- or underdeveloped self. Childhood is not a state of self, but merely an early developmental stage of it. To wish for it, to attempt to return or regress to it, is to attempt to deny or reverse the historical dimension of the development of self.

Nevertheless, this is what Marianne is depicted as

trying to achieve. There are passages in the novel, where she is portrayed as being in the world and yet existing 'for herself', the 'childlike' attitude: 'Sie stand unter anderen und wartete, ihr Gesicht erwartungsvoll, doch entspannt: offen und für sich' (LF 12). Here is the openness and receptiveness towards the world, which Handke praised in his Büchner prize speech, and in this condition Marianne is likened to her son and his attitudes. At one point she is 'völlig versunken, doch nicht erstarrt, eher nachgiebig' (LF 9-10). Her child too rapidly adopts the same attitude: 'Das schaute nun auch hinaus, versank seinerseits in den Anblick, mit sich öffnendem Mund' (LF 10). This is then juxtaposed to the scene of Bruno's arrival from a business trip to Scandinavia, where the man and the woman look at each other but convey no communication, but rather a sense of curious, stagnant hostility: 'Im Lift, der zur Tiefgarage hinunterführte, schaute er sie an, während sie ihn betrachtete' (LF 13).

In fact the whole relationship between Marianne and Bruno is characterised by his dominance and her subservience, and by his brutality when this dominance is in any way challenged. His power over her extends to such everyday things as deciding what she should wear when they go out: '"Zieh dir das Kleid mit dem Ausschnitt an, bitte." Die Frau, die noch hockte und weiter aufräumte, fragte: "Und was ziehst du an?" Bruno: "Ich gehe, wie ich bin; das war doch immer so."' (LF 18). It is precisely against the way things 'always were' that Marianne asserts herself, and it is precisely in the historical tradition of master and servant that Bruno finds such pleasure. In the restaurant he

describes the joy he experiences at being waited on and served:

"Heute hatte ich es nötig, so bedient zu werden. Welch eine Geborgenheit! Welch eine kleine Ewigkeit!" Der Ober stand still im Hintergrund, während Bruno weitersprach: "Im Flugzeug habe ich einen englischen Roman gelesen. Da gibt es eine Szene mit einem Diener, an dessen würdevoller Dienstbereitschaft der Held des Buches die reife Schönheit jahrhundertealten Feudaldienstes bewundert. Das Objekt dieser stolzen, respektvollen Dienerarbeit zu sein, das bedeutet ihm, wenn auch nur für kurze Stunne des Teetrinkens, nicht allein die Versöhnung mit sich selber, sondern, auf eine seltsame Weise, auch die Versöhnung mit der gesamten menschlichen Rasse." Die Frau wendete sich ab; Bruno rief, und sie schaute, ohne ihn anzuschauen. (LF 19-20)

This is exactly the situation of their marriage: feudal relations between master and servant, and the self-delusion of the master that he is somehow fulfilling the needs of the servant rather than imposing his own. Marianne's distaste at this is shown in her gesture of turning away, which Bruno immediately sees as a challenge to his authority, and he shouts at her to bring her back into line.

Bruno's power over her body continues to manifest itself in his decision that they should stay in the hotel overnight, in spite of her obvious embarrassment that he should see fit to announce this to the waiter. Bruno's behaviour after the break-up then oscillates between trying to understand Marianne, and reacting violently when he cannot. His power and violence are seen also to be rooted in his occupation. Marianne and Stefan visit him in his office and he outlines to them the various power games he plays in order to intimidate people he has dealings with professionally. This even extends to a special cream he uses, which enables him to stare longer: "Und das ist nun also mein Macht-Starren, mit dem ich hoffe, bald

Vorstandsmitglied zu sein." Er starrte, und Frau und Kind schauten ihn an' (LF 63). Handke constructs a quite clear connection here between Bruno's position and behaviour at work and those in his marriage. Even in his private dealings with Marianne he is often characterised by his 'staring', whereas the verb 'schauen' is used for her and Stefan:

Schauen/Starren ist ein zentrales Oppositionspaar des Romans: das erstere signalisiert einen Zustand der Offenheit gegenüber der Welt und gleichzeitig ein ruhiges Für-sich-sein, 'starren' dagegen einen Zustand der Verslossenheit, Borniertheit und gesellschaftlicher Machtausübung (und das ist fast jede Art von gesellschaftlicher Beziehung in dieser Erzählung). 79

It is this social determination of her life, which Marianne refuses to accept any longer: '"Wenn mir in Zukunft jemand erklärt, wie ich bin - auch wenn er mir schmeicheln oder mich bestärken will - werde ich mir diese Frechheit verbitten."' (LF 37-8). She shuns a society, which no longer appears as a medium within which the individual can develop a meaningful identity - rather this society is the place for loss of identity. Relationships between people are presented as power games, within which men constantly strive for dominance. True love, that is a love without this power or dependence, is only attainable in books, the translations Marianne undertakes to support herself financially: '"Im Land des Ideals: Ich erwarte von einem Mann, daß er mich liebt für das, was ich bin, und für das, was ich werde"' (LF 56), and later: '"Der Mann, von dem ich träume, das wird der sein, der in mir die Frau liebt, die nicht mehr von ihm abhängig ist." - "Und was werden Sie an ihm lieben?" - "Diese Art Liebe"' (LF 73).

Love without possession, love encompassing the person

not just as she is but also preserving her future potential, love and human relationships as liberating not restrictive frameworks - these are indeed fine objectives, but they only ever remain assertions or wishes in this novel. Handke does not, yet again, provide us with a social context or reality, within which the sentiments and wishes can become concrete actions and ways of life. The 'action' of the novel takes place within Marianne, and even here it is observed with the sober, objective eye of the camera, the narrative technique resembling a screenplay. Descriptions of physical movement abound - e.g. 'Sie reckte die Arme: ein Loch zeigte sich im Pullover unter einer Achsel; sie schob einen Finger hinein' (LF 38) - but these are never interpreted, they are merely reported. The narrative technique of Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, where there was such an emphasis on and sharing of Keuschnig's inner state, seems to have been reversed. Where Marianne does come into contact with an outside reality, this appears brutal, male orientated and collectively organised, so that her self-isolation in turn appears as an 'emancipation' in itself. After visiting Bruno in his office, Marianne and Stefan walk through the city:

Zwei Burschen gingen ganz nah an ihr vorbei und rülpsten ihr ins Gesicht. Sie gingen in eine öffentliche Toilette am Fluß, wo sie mit dem Kind, das sich nicht allein hineinwagte, in das Männerpissoir mußte. (...) Über der Trennwand zur Nachbarkabine - die Wand reichte nicht bis zur Decke - erschien plötzlich der Kopf eines Mannes, der nebenan hochsprang; dann noch einmal. Dann zeigte sich das grinsende Gesicht des Mannes zu ihren Füßen, da die Trennungswand auch nicht ganz zum Boden ging. (...) Eine alte Frau fiel mitten auf der Straße vornüber, auf das Gesicht. Zwei Männer, deren Autos zusammengestoßen waren, liefen aufeinander zu, und der eine versuchte den andern zu schlagen, während dieser ihn nur festhielt. (LF 65-6)

Against this background of aggression and hostility, where the whole city seems to be 'eine gleichmäßige Katastrophe' (LF 66), it is no wonder perhaps that Marianne should choose to be alone. But, as W. Martin Lüdke points out, isolation is a means within a process, not that process' goal: 'Das Alleinsein wird (...) als gelungene Individuierung gesetzt, und nicht als ein notwendiges Moment im Prozeß der Identitätsfindung verstanden. Was im Versuch der Emanzipation ein Mittel sein kann, erscheint hier weithin als Zweck.'⁸⁰ With isolation enjoying this position, it is also no wonder that a collective attempt to change women's subordinate role should be given such short shrift, as in the parody and ridiculing of the figure of Franziska and her women's group. Marianne's self is presented as not being able to stabilise itself within a social context, 'in der - immer problematischen - Auseinandersetzung mit anderen'.⁸¹ This should perhaps not be so surprising itself, however, as it would seem to be a socialised, public existence per se, rather than a position within a particular set of social relations, which, as with Keuschnig, causes Marianne's alienation. Any emancipation must necessitate withdrawing from society altogether, rather than attempting to change one's role within that society. Raised to this level, it would seem to be irrelevant that Marianne is a woman, as her problems are existentialised and lose most of their historical specificity: 'Es stellt sich bald heraus, daß es hier weniger um die gesellschaftlichen Strukturen und Bedingungen der Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung geht, als um das alte Handke-Thema der vergewaltigten Individualität überhaupt.

Gesellschaft erscheint hier fast nur als Negation.'⁸²

The exotic nature of her emancipation is, perhaps unconsciously, presented in the song text, from which the book derives its title. The state of the individual in the collective, the 'Fürsichsein' of the child, is placed outside a recognisable society:

Ich möchte dich IN EINEM FREMDEN ERDTEIL sehen
Denn da werde ich dich unter den andern endlich allein
sehen
Und du wirst unter tausend andern MICH sehen
Und wir werden endlich aufeinander zugehen (LF 102)

Similarly, the final long scene of the book, the party, has an unreal quality about it. It is an event where all social hierarchies, individual gaps and obstacles between people are 'magically' overcome, where strangers embrace each other, arguments are laid aside and concrete social and economic differences between people are miraculously forgotten - the publisher, having left his chauffeur outside for hours when he visited Marianne previously, now offers to drive him home! Thus the lefthanded woman's assertion at the end of the novel - '"Du hast dich nicht verraten. Und niemand wird dich mehr demütigen!"' (LF 130) - remains untested by this gathering. As Lüdke remarks, this is where the story should really begin: 'Anders gesagt, Handkes magischer Realismus bedürfte der Einbindung in die Realität.'⁸¹ Without this incorporation into social reality, liberation or 'emancipation' becomes in this novel 'the transcendence of fixed and rigid definitions of social roles'.⁸³ Inner world merely deems or asserts itself free of the pressures of outer world, and the latter 'magically' disappear.

This withdrawal from society into the inner world

as the only means of safeguarding the self is based upon a conception of the relationship between the individual and society as antagonistic, static and dualistic. These adjectives are used by Uwe Timm and Roman Ritter in two essays published in 1976, which attempt to investigate the 'new subjectivity' in German literature of the Seventies. On the one hand, Timm discusses the lyric of the Seventies and notes that its incorporation of subjective, individual experience does not mean that it distances itself from reality, because the individual and society are seen as inextricably linked:

Individualität meint - richtig verstanden - nicht das Private, das sich vom Gesellschaftlichen abgrenzt, sondern immer auch komplementär die Gesellschaft, mit der das Individuum in einem dialektischen Wechselverhältnis steht. Gesellschaft und gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen werden von den Individuen bestimmt, die aber ihrerseits wiederum unter den gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen handeln, in die sie hineingeboren worden sind. Individuum und Gesellschaft sind jeweils geschichtlich Besondere. 84

Hence, the identity of the individual is always in relation to other individuals within specific social relations. This contains in fact part of the original meaning of the word 'individual', which, according to Raymond Williams, 'originally meant indivisible (...) (and) "indivisible" (stresses) a necessary connection (with others)'.⁸⁵ Within the context of such an understanding of the relationship between the individual and society, the notion of withdrawing from society in order to gain a sense of self is nonsensical. Timm, on the other hand, discusses that literature, which is most frequently termed the 'new subjectivity' - Handke, Struck, Born - and misses in it this dialectical relationship between the individual and society. Rather there is, as we have seen in our analysis

of Handke, a basic antagonism between the two. They are both unmoving blocks, which cause friction whenever they meet. What is more, society is seen as an absolute, and not as a particular historical phenomenon: 'Was sich heute als neuester Subjektivismus in der Literatur aufwirft, baut zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft einen statischen Dualismus auf. Das Leiden und die Irritation des Individuums resultieren nicht aus einer konkreten Gesellschaft, sondern entspringen der Gesellschaft an sich.'⁸⁶ Ritter concurs with Timm and sees one group of writers who want 'den dialektischen Zusammenhang zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft nicht zerreißen, sondern konkretisieren und anschaulicher machen'.⁸⁷ The other group, which includes Handke, can only see tension and conflict between the two:

Die andere Gruppe sieht einen letztlich unversöhnlichen Gegensatz zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft, der verabsolutiert wird. Die Entwicklung von Gesellschaft und Individuum wird enthistorisiert; was der vorhin genannten Gruppe veränderbare gesellschaftliche Verhältnisse sind, erscheint diesen Autoren als der Rahmen für menschliche Existenz überhaupt. ⁸⁷

This rendering absolute of what are concrete, historical forces and phenomena - and this includes language and perception in Handke's earlier works - means that the notion of confrontation and change cannot be sited within the outer world, which for Ritter's second group is unchanging and unchangeable. Hence, any such notion must be transferred to the inner world in withdrawal, 'in einer Konzeption von Innerlichkeit, die sich als selbstgewählter Freiraum in einer Welt der Anpassung und Zerstörung versteht, als Entwurf gegen eine äußere Welt, die den Einzelnen verbraucht und verwüstet'.⁸⁸ The rigidity of

the outer world is transcended and hope for the future is placed in the discovery of ahistorical, timeless 'laws' and 'secrets' of existence. This is the main impetus behind Handke's tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr. The notion of change is sited within the isolated consciousness, regardless of the constitution of the society within which that consciousness lives. This is a development, which is flatly contradicted by Handke's account of his own mother's life in Wunschloses Unglück. There, it was the painful description of the lack of the opportunity to define her own life within a set of social relations, which accorded women a subordinate role, that gave the book such force. This momentary glimpse of a political dimension to Handke's work has now completely disappeared:

Veränderung wird auf das metaphysisch verklärte Subjekt beschränkt. Diese Sorte von "neuer" Innerlichkeit läßt in der Gesellschaft alles beim alten. Insofern beinhaltet sie, ob ausgesprochen oder nicht, eine prinzipielle Absage an politisches Denken und Handeln als Tätigkeiten, die den Menschen in die Lage versetzen, seine Geschichte und Zukunft selbst zu gestalten. 89

The formation of a future and a coming to terms with the past is something the tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr does in its own way concern itself with, and it is to an investigation of these works that we now finally turn.

V. THE SEARCH FOR A NEW ORDER: LANGSAME HEIMKEHR

'"Somewhere I lost connection..."'¹ was, we saw, the motto of the volume Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat. The feelings of 'senselessness' and loss of coherence, which, for example, Keuschnig experienced in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, were however only a prelude to a new 'happiness', where the individual no longer feels the need to subject the world to order, to 'sense', to a system of meaning, to a 'final image'. The tetralogy Langsame Heimkehr - incorporating Langsame Heimkehr, Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, Kindergeschichte and Über die Dörfer² - takes this process a stage further as Handke portrays his figures, and, in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire and Kindergeschichte, himself, searching for 'laws' and 'secrets', a new order, a new connection, to 'heal' the disharmony, the 'ontological split' between the self and the world, consciousness and reality, inner and outer world. The works abound with formulations to describe this task. Peter Rütz sees Langsame Heimkehr as an attempt to find 'Zusammenhang, Form und "Heil" verheißende Harmonie'³ and characterises the novel as a 'Suche nach Sinn und Zusammenhang'.⁴ This 'connection' and the need for it is mentioned in the very first sentence of the novel, where Handke writes of his main figure, the geologist Valentin Sorger: 'Sorger hatte schon einige ihm nah gekommene Menschen überlebt und empfand keine Sehnsucht mehr, doch oft eine selbstlose Daseinslust und zuzeiten ein animalisch gewordenes, auf die Augenlider drückendes Bedürfnis nach Heil' (LH 9). This 'need for healing' does not involve

the agency of other people - Sorger has after all 'survived' the intrusion of anyone else into his life - and in this Sorger is a descendant of Marianne in Die links-händige Frau. At the end of that story she was depicted in her isolation on her balcony, drawing pictures, 'jeden Gegenstand in allen Einzelheiten' (LF 131). Sorger's work as a geologist has, as we shall see, a similar function of registering and recording the world - in this case the landscape of Alaska - but with definite links to giving form to his own inner world as well.

This is indeed achieved on almost the last page of the novel, where, in a direct reference back to that first sentence, the narrator addresses Sorger: 'Das phantasielose, blutsaugerische Elend ließ von dir ab, und du spürtest deine Lider wie gesalbt von dem ewigen wilden Bedürfnis nach Erlösung' (LH 193). Between these two passages the novel attempts to chart the beginnings of Sorger's 'slow homecoming', his search for and experience of the 'gesetzgebender Augenblick' (LH 168). This 'law', 'connection' or 'form' is not however already present in phenomena, ready to be found, but must be searched for and invented, 'nicht gefunden, sondern erfunden'.⁵ This involves the agency of the individual imagination, as the inner world asserts itself and its own sense of order against the 'final images of the world' produced by the outer world: '"Der Zusammenhang ist möglich", schrieb er unter der Zeichnung. "Jeder einzelne Augenblick meines Lebens geht mit jedem anderen zusammen - ohne Hilfsglieder. Es existiert eine unmittelbare Verbindung; ich muß sie nur frei phantasieren"' (LH 112-3). This idea receives

various formulations in the other works of the tetralogy.

In Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, indeed, the same sentence is repeated word for word:

In Grillparzers Armen Spielmann las ich dann: "Ich zitterte vor Begierde nach dem Zusammenhang." Und so kam wieder die Lust auf das Eine in Allem. Ich wußte ja: Der Zusammenhang ist möglich. Jeder einzelne Augenblick meines Lebens geht mit jedem anderen zusammen - ohne Hilfglieder. Es existiert eine unmittelbare Verbindung; ich muß sie nur frei-phantasieren. (LSV 100)

'Ein Zusammenhang ist da, nicht erklärbar, doch zu erzählen' (LSV 69) is the formulation at another point, whilst in Kindergeschichte, the narrator can announce: "'Ich arbeite an dem Geheimnis der Welt'" (KG 91), although he has to admit that this is a 'von niemandem auf einen Schluß zu bringender Gedanke'. Common to all these works then is a sense of what W. Martin Lüdke calls a 'verborgener Sinn des Daseins', to be found in 'die stets ferne, darum für jede Projektion zugängliche Natur':

Das - immer ohnmächtiger werdende - Subjekt zieht sich in den vermeintlich geschützten Binnenraum seiner Innerlichkeit zurück und landet, ehe sich's versieht, in einer mal "unschuldigen", stets "geheimnisvoll-rätselhaften", notfalls auch fernen, immer irgendwie ursprünglich-unmittelbaren - Natur. 6

This is particularly true of Langsame Heimkehr and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, although Kindergeschichte and Über die Dörfer deal with 'innocence' and 'directness' as ways of overcoming the oppressive 'public rationality' referred to in the previous chapter as well: in the former it is the 'innocence' of the child, in the latter the return and coming to terms with tradition, the return 'home'.

The descent of the 'plane through the clouds at the end of Langsame Heimkehr is the last stage of Sorger's

journey from Alaska through San Francisco, the Rocky Mountains and New York to Europe. Sorger is seen to suffer from the same self/world split we have already encountered in most of Handke's works. Handke describes it as the 'Disharmonie von Anfang an zwischen dem Ich und der Gemeinschaftswelt, den ontologischen Riß zwischen manchen Figuren und der Geschichte'.⁷ Like Marianne, Sorger withdraws into the self in search of a way to heal or bridge this split. The difference is that whereas Marianne and Keuschnig remained within their original environment, Sorger now withdraws to the coldness and strangeness of Alaska. Alaska functions then both as a 'strange' land, causing the main figure to re-evaluate himself, as America also functioned in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, and as a reflection of Sorger's inner state - cold, lonely, joyless. The use of a natural landscape in this way **relieves** Handke of the necessity of explaining or justifying Sorger's feelings, however. More than any other book by Handke, Langsame Heimkehr presents this alienation and isolation as given, as 'natural', and indeed, to judge from the interview with Handke quoted above, this is the way Handke sees it, referring to the split as a condition of existence per se, as 'ontological'. The historical framework, which Handke had provided in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied and Wunschloses Unglück, has now disappeared: 'Er hat seiner Isolation eine Endgültigkeit zugesprochen und sie damit faktisch fetischiert. Er stellt sie nicht mehr als das Schmerz-Ergebnis einer konkreten geschichtlichen Krisensituation dar.'⁸ Sorger exists, at least in Alaska, outside history - one critic

remarks: 'Die Erzählung erzählt ein Raumereignis, kein Zeitereignis.'⁹ As such, it is hardly surprising that he can overcome this 'disharmony' merely through the power of his own imagination, merely through assertion - this is after all the only way open to him to do so, as such isolation is presented as a 'natural' phenomenon and therefore, presumably, immune to change through human action.

The close correlation between the landscape of Alaska and the 'landscape' of Sorger's inner world is reflected in his work: he is engaged in observing, categorising, ordering and finding forms in the Alaskan tundra, and this work turns the area into his 'höchstpersönliche(m) Raum' (LH 11), procures and allows him to possess it, and thereby has an influence on the advancement of his own self-possession. The great river, although destructive 'in der Außenwelt', is, through its internalisation in Sorger's form-finding work, 'durch ihre Gesetze zu einer guten Innenkraft verwandelt, stärkend und beruhigend' (LH 12). Inner world defines and gives meaning to outer world: 'Nicht mehr (bestimmt) das Sein das Bewußtsein, sondern das menschliche Subjekt die Erkenntnisgegenstände'.¹⁰ No longer is the environment threatening and a source of danger to the self as it was with Bloch in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, but it becomes the 'Sinn setzender Beziehungsraum'.¹¹ Its appropriation is seen - and this is the opposite pole to the exaggerated self-appropriation of Marianne through extended inner reflection - as a way of regaining the lost unity between the world and the self, a way of eventually 'returning home':

Die Außenwelt und ihre Räume sind der Gehalt seines konturlosen Innern, die Einarbeitung in sie das Gegenmittel gegen "die große Formlosigkeit". Es ist eine sehr persönliche Wissenschaft, eine Arbeit weniger der Analyse als der Synthese, deren Sinn es ist, sich zu retten und zusammenzufügen. 12

The observation and registration of nature for Sorger's forthcoming study "Über Räume" becomes an aid for him in the gaining of 'Dauer' and a space in which to live: 'Orientierung und lebensnotwendiger Atemraum (und damit das Selbstvertrauen) ergaben eins das andere' (LH 13). It is thus a struggle against his own arbitrariness - having no 'connection' -, against his sense of being divorced from the harmony of the world, and within these terms the 'innocence' and naivety of the child become positive attributes, as they were in previous books. Indeed, the cultivation of the attitude of the child becomes a leading theme, although it is difficult to see how the child can be immune to a split which Handke defines as 'ontological', that is, connected with the nature of being as opposed to specific social and historical relations:

Er hatte die Umwelt in jeder geringsten Form - einer Rille im Stein, einer wechselnden Färbung im Schlamm, dem vor einer Pflanze angewehten Sand - ernst zu nehmen, wie nur ein Kind ernstnehmen kann, damit er, der kaum irgendwo Zugehörnde, sonst nirgendwo Zuständige, sich für wen auch immer zusammenhielte - und das gelang ihm manchmal nur mit wütender Selbstüberwindung. (LH 15)

The connection between this work and Sorger's further existence is presented as being absolute:

Seine Erfassung der Erdgestalt, nicht fanatisch betrieben, sondern so inständig, daß er sich selbst dabei allmählich als Eigengestalt mitfühlte, hatte, indem sie ihn von der mit bloßen Launen und Stimmungen drohenden Großen Formlosigkeit abgrenzte, tatsächlich bis jetzt seine Seele gerettet. (LH 15-16)

The language Handke uses here, indeed the language he uses throughout the novel, borders on the religious, and even

Sorger's science is seen as a kind of religion, which has direct relevance to and connections with others: 'Erst seine Arbeit machte ihn wieder beziehungsfähig, und wahlfähig, im zweifachen Sinn: er konnte wählen und gewählt werden. Von wem? Von wem auch immer: er wollte nur wählbar sein' (LH 15).

Already at this early stage in the novel we have the basis for the eventual 'gesetzgebende(n) Augenblick' (LH 168) which Sorger experiences in the third part. The novel, in customary Handke fashion, proceeds next to elaborate on and extend these already established feelings of lack of orientation and 'connection' in the world followed by re-acquisition of 'das Raumgefühl' (LH 33) and thereby of feelings of selfhood, of feelings of 'returning home'. Gradually positive moments crystallise out of Sorger's ever-changing experiences. The first is a gaining of a decisiveness, an affirmation of a sense of control: 'Der sich immer tiefer neigende Kopf bedeutete dabei nicht Selbstaufgabe, sondern Entschiedenheit: "Ich bin es, der bestimmt"' (LH 69). This in turn is a satisfaction of a 'besiegelender Wunsch nach einer Entscheidung' (LH 39), which he had experienced earlier faced with 'die Lust an einem spontanen Ausruf, am Ausrufen überhaupt, mit dem nicht nur die Abwesenheit von Schuld bewiesen, sondern jene strahlende Unschuld wiederhergestellt würde, mit der sich dauerhaft leben ließe' (LH 38). This combination of 'innocence' and 'permanence' is a prelude to Handke's later depiction of his child in Kindergeschichte, where a particular stage within a development within history is raised to a state of being.

A further positive moment indicating an approach to the world and a re-establishment of 'connection' is seen in Sorger's attitude to language. Formerly lodged between the self and the world, as in Kaspar or Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter, now language is 'die Friedensstifterin: sie wirkte als der ideale Humor, der den Betrachter mit den äußeren Dingen beseelte' (LH 100). This new relationship through language with the outer world is to be explored further by Handke in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire. Not only is there a changed relationship to the world but also to others within that world. At first this is only noticed in the others - the 'significance' of the language used here hardly needs to be underlined - as when Sorger makes the following remark about his neighbour in San Francisco: 'Die Ehe war für sie zu der Form geworden, welche ihr eine kindliche Offenheit bewahrte' (LH 106). At the same time however this has a social realm of action for this child-like openness is encapsulated 'in einem ungezwungenen Gemeinsinn' (LH 106) - private and public would seem to converge.

In his efforts to regain his 'home' Sorger exploits more and more the existence of the relationship between consciousness and world, which is so useful to him in his work: 'Das Bewußtsein (erzeugte) selber mit der Zeit in jeder Landschaft sich seine eigenen kleinen Räume' (LH 107). This idea is reflected too in the motto to the book: '"Dann, als ich kopfüber den Pfad hinunterstolperte, war da plötzlich eine Form..."'. These 'Phantasieräume' are themselves part however of a collective consciousness, in that although discovered each time anew by each person,

they are in fact well known to those who have inhabited the landscape for years. To observe and describe this collective-yet-personal appropriation of the landscape is to be on the trail of 'die das Zuhause-Gefühl erzeugenden Flurzeichen der Kinderzeit' (LH 109). Using then the descriptive apparatus and insights of Alaska, Sorger resolves to turn to the European environment of his childhood, another step in his 'slow return home'. With this comes the adoption of his identity as a European again, a regaining of an historical existence: 'Und er erkannte sich in der eigenen Höflichkeit auch wieder: sie erzeugte an diesem Abend die Idee eines "Landes", die der höfliche Sorger verkörperte und in deren Gestalt er sich ganz weitergab' (LH 135-6). Allied to this is the beginning of a regaining of the human world (the 'Gemeinschaftswelt' of Handke's interview quoted above) through the embassy of language:

Jeder Satz, mit dem er, den drohenden bloßen Sprechzwang beherrschend, sich an die anderen richtete, würde ihn, hielt er sich nur bei jedem Wort für (allein) verantwortlich, wieder an die Menschenvelt anstücken helfen. Mit jedem Wort, das Sorger an diesem Abend (mühselig) äußerte ("langsam formen!" dachte er), warb er zugleich um Aufnahme in das Haus, unter dessen Menschen - in sein "Land". (LH 136-7)

This 'land' is not his country or a specific region but the house of his birth - to re-appear in Über die Körper - and with this 'return home' the harmony would be restored through the strength of a permanent reconciliation: '"Ist es vermessen, daß ich die Harmonie, die Synthese und die Heiterkeit will? Sind Vollkommenheit und Vollendung meine Zwangsideoe? Ich erlebe es als eine Pflicht, besser zu werden; besser ich selber zu sein"' (LH 140-41).

This develops into not only an improvement of self but a

new, caring relationship with others incorporating responsibility, a sense of community and a common lot: '"Ich brauche die Gewißheit, ich selber zu sein und für andere verantwortlich zu sein"' (LH 141). This increasing nearness to 'home' means an increasing nearness to the healing of the split Handke referred to in the interview, an increasing nearness to the establishment of the 'lost connection'.

The 'gesetzgebender Augenblick' - reminiscent of the 'moment of true feeling' - happens then in a coffee shop in New York. Sorger experiences an overwhelming consciousness of being in the process of time, of being an historical subject. With this connection established between himself and history comes a liberation from personal guilt and the setting free of an active potential for the individual: '"Es ist (...) mein geschichtlicher Augenblick: ich lerne (ja, ich kann noch lernen), daß die Geschichte nicht bloß eine Aufeinanderfolge von Übeln ist, die einer wie ich nur ohnmächtig schmähen kann - sondern auch, seit jeher, eine von jedermann (auch von mir) fortsetzbare, friedensstiftende Form"' (LH 168). It becomes clear then that this is not so much a re-established connection between Sorger and history as rather a different type of connection. The attitude that history is 'eine Aufeinanderfolge von Übeln', which Sorger formerly held and which Handke was perhaps referring to when he spoke of the 'ontological split between some figures and history', is itself a type of connection, but one in which the individual feels powerless to influence events. By fleeing to Alaska Sorger is not stepping out of history,

but merely expressing a particular type of relationship to it. Coming back to Europe is not stepping into history so much as declaring himself to be no longer an object but an historical subject: '"Ich erkläre mich verantwortlich für meine Zukunft, sehne mich nach der ewigen Vernunft und will nie mehr allein sein. So sei es."' (LH 169). But this declaration must be acted upon to have any validity.

This then happens as the healing within Sorger is transferred to the character Esch, who is plagued with job, family and money problems. Yet this healing is not integrated by Handke into a scene which confronts Esch' particular problems, but rather the whole affair takes on a familiar mystical air:

Sorger wünschte sich seine Macht herbei und verwandelte sich (es war schwer) in die Nische, in der sie beide saßen, wühlte sich über den Zufallsbekannten und nahm ihn, der über seinen Zustand schon erstaunt den Kopf zu schütteln begann und sich zwischendurch wieder höflich das Taschentuch borgte, in sich auf, bis sich der starre Torso des anderen allmählich neu belebte und einen zunächst grotesken, dann liebenswürdigen Kinderkopf bekam und sich schließlich die Arme rieb, aus denen, wie er sagte, eben "die Angst wegschwirrte". (LH 173-4)

Sorger becomes the comforting father in this scene and Esch his child or son, and this relationship is then transferred into the religious realm as Sorger becomes his priest:

'Sorger wurde sein Vorsprecher: befahl und verbot ihm (der in seiner Nach-Angst gerne gehorsam war); sprach ihn frei von Schmerz; weissagte ihm Gutes und gab ihm schließlich den Segen' (LH 177-8). As a result of this encounter Esch regains his 'Heimkehrfähigkeit' (LH 184) and leaves Sorger on the streets of New York.

Back in his hotel room Sorger searches for 'eine Idee

von der richtigen menschlichen Arbeit (...) wo Ekel und Trennungsschmerz zwischen ihm und der Welt aufgehoben wären' (LH 190), that is, an active participation in and incorporation of the healing process. He spreads out his notes on the Alaskan landscape in front of him and becomes one with their 'pattern':

Und bewegungslos stand er über das vielfarbige, an manchen Stellen schon altersblasse Muster gebeugt, bis er selber eine ruhige Farbe unter anderen wurde. Er blätterte die Hefte durch und sah sich in der Schrift verschwinden: in der Geschichte der Geschichten einer Geschichte von Sonne und Schnee. Jetzt könnte er alle zu sich überreden, und die dunkle Weltkugel zeigte sich als eine zu beherrschende, sogar bis ins Innerste zu entschlüsselnde Maschine. (LH 190-1)

It is this capturing, decoding and 'realisation' of nature and the world through images and words which attempts to function in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire as a bulwark, indeed an overcoming of the 'ontological split', a re-establishment of 'connection'.

This kind of employment of art clearly has roots within a specific idea of nature, an idea which, as is intimated by Handke's use of the word 'Maschine' in his description of Gargner in his hotel room, sees principles of construction - geometry, architecture - to be found in the landscape. This was the principle behind Cézanne's later painting culminating in the Mont St. Victoire pictures. Cézanne questioned and challenged the whole tradition of the technique of creating perspective in painting, of constructing spatial connections between two-dimensional images. This was a questioning, which had consequences for his conception of the subject's relationship to space:

Instead of spacing the planes out towards the horizon, he piled them up, thus achieving arbitrarily constructed depth. At the same time, he imposed an architectural order on the composition and gave colour a constructive purpose. He wanted to create volume by means of coloured planes (...) Nature offered nothing to his gaze but planes, and so he painted faces, fruit, sky and trees with square or triangular touches. 13

This view of nature developed to the point where it almost became self-sufficient as the intellectual impulse overrode the stimulus from the outside world, the painting became an expression of the superiority of inner world and imagination over outer world and reality:

In the views of Gardanne, more than those of l'Estaque, the construction became a purely intellectual creation, with no immediate connection with the material of nature. Reality is present but it has been transformed by imagination and intellectual speculations. Cézanne was obsessed with his vision of the geometric structure beneath the surface of things. 14

This searching for forms is, of course, something Sorger was attempting and is now the position Handke adopts in relation to the landscape of Cézanne's pictures and to his own writing, and attempts to describe this landscape in words. Whether the techniques of a particular kind of art produced within a particular historical period can simply be transferred to literature is an issue which will be considered in our discussion of the last chapter of Handke's book. For the most part, Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire asserts rather than shows, and thereby reproduces a pattern we have noticed in other works by Handke, divorcing these 'illuminations' or 'laws' or 'secrets' from any historical context and proclaiming them as ontological certainties: 'In der "Lehre der Sainte-Victoire" wird nun die durch die Bilder Cézannes gefilterte Naturerkenntnis zur Wesenserkenntnis der Wirklichkeit schlechthin erhoben.'¹⁵

Some ten years earlier, in Die Angst des Tormanns

beim Elfmeter, a landscape threatened Bloch and hemmed him in. In Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied the self was able to absorb nature and be absorbed by it in the episode with the cypress tree (KB 95). This capacity is seen in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire to be self-denying and the authorial process of 'sich einträumen in die Dinge' does not enable the communicative function of art to co-exist:

Zwar sah er immer wieder ein Wesen der Dinge, aber das ließ sich nicht weitergeben; und indem er es zum Trotz festhalten wollte, wurde er selber sich ungewiß.
- Nein, die magischen Bilder - auch der Zypressen - waren nicht die richtigen für mich. (LSV 26)

Rather, the self now orders, constructs and creates nature, as Sorger had done, according to inner intellectual as well as sensual criteria. Cézanne once wrote the following to his son: "Painting is not the slavish copying of an object but the grasping of a harmony between several interactions (...) A powerful organising mind is the best aid to sensation in the realisation of a work of art."¹⁶ These two elements, intellect and sensation, are noted by Handke in his quoting of a phrase used by Cézanne to describe his own method of working, a process of painting '"im Bedenken des Gesehenen"' (LSV 22). This examination of nature with the intellect had the aim of 'realising' that nature. This was not merely a statement of its existence through art - this would have been an imitation of a tangible reality - but rather a 'glimpse of its inner being', a process only possible through the reconstruction of reality, for Cézanne 'discovered in the universe the geometry that controls the whole of creation'.¹⁷ Thus, to 'realise' is to use the artificial constructs of the mind and art to attain a lasting impression of nature's truth, 'to

eternalise the fleeting awareness of life by the most fitting expression, or to find an adequate medium for rendering the whole range of forms and the inner magic of the world'.¹⁸ Handke describes Cézanne's realisations as 'Verwandlung und Bergung der Dinge in Gefahr' (LSV 84) and, with this in mind, he resolves, with Cézanne as his 'Lehrmeister' (LSV 33), to 'realise' his own world, to express its 'inner magic', its 'secret': 'So vertiefe ich mich, im Bedürfnis nach Dauer, willentlich in die alltäglichen, gemachten Dinge' (LSV 82).

But this undertaking of the author no longer remains a resolution or assertion. The goal is now to communicate even if the act of writing is only a source of enlightenment to himself: 'Ein Wunschbild von mir, als dem Schriftsteller, wurde es dann einmal, mit meinem Geschriebenen für jemand anderen (der auch immer wieder ich selber sein konnte) ein Bienenweg zu sein' (LSV 71). Peter Laemmel sees Handke on the trail of a new 'Gelassenheit zu den Dingen', which is the incorporation not only of the experience of the concrete, physical side of objects, but also of their 'metaphysical' side: '"Die Gelassenheit zu den Dingen und die Offenheit für das Geheimnis gehören zusammen. Sie gewähren uns die Möglichkeit, uns auf eine ganz andere Weise in der Welt aufzuhalten"' (Heidegger)¹⁹. From this new 'composure towards things' and 'openness for the secret' arises, according to Laemmel, the re-capturing of the 'Zusammenhang des einzelnen mit dem Ganzen',²⁰ the re-establishment of 'connection' between the self and world. The final description of the wood near Salzburg in the last chapter of the book must be seen

as an attempt by Handke at a 'realisation' in prose, the convergence and unity of self and world through art. As such, it is an undertaking to satisfy the thought that "nur mit einem Glauben könnten die Dinge auch auf die Dauer wirklich bleiben" (LSV 83). This 'faith', the 'Lehre' received from Cézanne, is the incorporation in art of description and invention, Cézanne's categories of 'vision and mind'.²⁰

It is possible to analyse Handke's final chapter in great detail and pick out those instances where the fictional element, that of invention and 'mind', breaks through the description or 'vision'. These moments are usually accompanied by the use of modal verbs and introduce human or animal elements into what is otherwise a dense, resistant text, where lines, planes and directions of paths in the landscape are almost self-consciously used by Handke in deference to the idea of the geometric construction behind nature:

Am Ende der Straße erweist sich die Kiefernreihe dort als der Eingang zu einem Friedhof. Aus dem Gasthaus davor werden manchmal Betrunkene gestoßen, die noch eine Zeitlang im Trotzgesang vor der Tür bleiben, dann jäh verstummen und weggehen. (...) Jeder Weg ist eine lange Jandelallee, in deren Ausgangsbogen grün das Vorfeld zu dem Morzger Wald schimmert. Manchmal bewegen sich hier langsame Trauerzüge, wo bei Glockengeläute hinter einem Sarg einhergehende Fremde für einen Augenblick zu eigenen, Angehörigen werden. (LSV 124-5)

The overwhelming impression of this last chapter is however one of a constant accumulation of details, which are all given equal importance and weight. Stretching over some eighteen pages, the description becomes tiring to read, and the reader is unable to gather any overall impression of the world, as he would from a painting. Instead, details are compiled without any perspective on the world arising

out of them. The problem of representation which Handke is unable to overcome here stems from the medium he has chosen as much as from his own particular capabilities.

We 'read' or receive paintings differently from the way we 'read' or receive prose. Painting presents itself to us 'im zeitlichen Zugleich', whereas prose operates 'im zeitlichen Nacheinander'.²¹ Reading is a linear process through the very movement of the eyes across the page and it is also an accumulative process within time. Because every word we read cannot be recalled at will, unlike every detail of a painting which can be continuously referred to as we look at the painting, reading becomes also a selective process. In addition, the medium of literature, language, is an historical phenomenon, and as such is hardly suited to bridging an 'ontological split' between the self and the world. The medium of painting does not have this historical ballast, although clearly each particular painting (as with each particular work of literature) stands in some relationship to the time it was produced in. Literature is thus, as an historical phenomenon itself, unsuited and indeed unable to re-establish a 'connection' which is described as 'ontological'. The final chapter of Wie Lehre der Sainte-Victoire fails in its task because of this, and it is a failure which Handke himself perhaps recognises when he turns away from nature at the end of the book towards the historical figure of his own child: 'Dann einatmen und weg vom Wald. Zurück zu den heutigen Menschen (...) Zu Hause das Augenpaar?' (LSV 139).

We call Handke's daughter here an 'historical figure',

but this is by no means the way she is perceived or portrayed in Kindergeschichte. For the most part, the child - she is never referred to by her name but always as 'das Kind' - is presented as existing outside human society or history, as existing 'für sich'. As we know, this 'Fürsichsein' has always been viewed with optimism in Handke's work as a state where lack of self-consciousness, lack of order within the public world, allows an 'innocent directness' to the world. It was an attitude which, in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung and Die linkshändige Frau, was cultivated by the main figures in their search for 'emancipation' or a 'moment of true feeling', when the world began anew, without systematisation or categorisation into 'final images'. With this value in Handke's work, it is hardly surprising that a book about his own child should constantly emphasise the child's 'way of seeing' and its importance to the narrator, who in turn is never referred to by name, but is rather 'der Erwachsene' or 'der Heranwachsende'. Indeed, such is the importance of the child to the narrator that he calls it his personal teacher:

Er war überzeugt, daß das Kind da ein großes Gesetz verkörperte, welches er selber entweder vergessen oder nie gehabt hatte. War es ihm denn nicht im ersten Moment schon erschienen als sein persönlicher Lehrherr? Nicht erst irgendwelchen besonderen Äußerungen aus "Kindermund" also glaubte er, sondern seinem bloßen Vorhandensein: dem Menschenwesen, das war, das es war. Das-es-war gab dem Erwachsenen das Wahrheitsmaß an; für ein Leben, wie es sein sollte. (KG 63)

Throughout Kindergeschichte there are references to the child providing the narrator with 'laws' or 'order', of re-establishing the 'connection'. The narration adapts itself to this state of affairs as well. The child is

never given a voice for herself, but only exists in relation to the narrator, she functions as a 'Reflexperson des Erzählers'.²² Where, on a few isolated occasions, she is presented with a life of her own - when she plays with other children, goes to school, or makes irritating demands on her father - the tone of the narration changes from the triumph of the majority of the book to one of sadness, annoyance and disappointment. These moments are however rare. By and large the portrayal of the child has less to do with such concrete experiences and more to do with the narrator: his needs, wishes and expectations. Even where these moments are narrated and the basic, everyday concerns of fatherhood are addressed, Handke tends to use vocabulary which mystifies these moments and invests them with religious qualities. One episode stands out, where, after a night of heavy rain, the ground floor of the house is flooded up to the narrator's knees. As he tries to deal with the water, the child is calling to him from upstairs in a 'Katastrophenton' (KG 52):

Da verlor der knietief in dem Naß stehende Erwachsene die Besinnung, stürzte hinauf gleich einem Totschläger und schlug das Kind mit aller Gewalt, so wie er wohl noch nie einen Menschen geschlagen hatte, in das Gesicht. Das Entsetzen des Täters war fast gleichzeitig. Er trug das weinende Kind, selber bitter ermangelnd der Tränen, in den Räumen umher, wo überall die Tore des Gerichts offenstanden, mit den schalltoten Hitzestößen der Posaunen. (...) Erstmals sah sich der Erwachsene da als einen schlechten Menschen; nicht bloß ein Bösewicht war er, sondern ein Verworfener: und seine Tat konnte durch keine weltliche Strafe gesühnt werden. (KG 53)

Aggression towards the child is thus turned into an experience of the Judgement Day, where sinners are called to account for themselves before God. Clearly, Handke feels great shame and guilt at his action towards the

defenceless child. He calms down and sits with the child and attempts to talk with it 'in den bisher unaussprechlichen, auch undenkbaeren ältesten Formen der Menschheit' (KG 54).

Slowly the child responds and the narrator is comforted:

Das so Angeredete nickt zu den Wörtern, und dann zeigt sich, an der ruhig weinenden Gestalt, wie schon einmal, kurz ein klares, strahlendes Augenpaar, gleichsam erhöht über dem Umweltdunst, und selten hat es für einen elenden Sterblichen einen flammenderen Trost gegeben. (KG 54)

It is almost as if the child has 'redeemed' or 'delivered' the narrator from his immediate guilt, although he does go on to report that the episode stayed with him for a long time.

The religious quality of this episode, with the child appearing as the 'saviour' and the narrator as the 'Verdammter' (KG 53), is indicative of the type of significance and importance the child embodies for the narrator. Although the narrator claims after hitting his daughter that 'er (...) das einzige zerstört (hatte), das ihm je das Hochgefühl vor etwas dauerhaft Wirklichem gegeben hatte' (KG 53), it is clear in the book that this 'reality' has nothing to do with involvement in the development of an individual within history. As we saw above, Handke reported that the child appeared to him 'im ersten Moment (...) als sein persönlicher Lehrherr' (KG 53), and if we turn back to the description of the birth we read the following passage: 'Als dem Erwachsenen durch die Trennglasscheibe das Kind gezeigt wurde, erblickte er da kein Neugeborenes, sondern einen vollkommenen Menschen' (KG 9). Handke clearly does not mean a 'complete person' in physical terms, but rather in terms of identity.

As such, the child's individuality would seem to pre-exist historical and social forces. The child's individuality and identity is formed and private, given at birth, in much the same way as Kaspar had a private existence before learning the language of the 'Einsager'. The meeting with society does not then become a forming or developmental process, but rather a process of antagonism and destruction of this individuality. 'Fürsichsein', the existing for its own awareness of the child, becomes 'Außersichsein', once the child becomes involved with others:

In diesen Kreis, unter die Mehrzahl, gesteckt, hörte es auf der Stelle auf, ein Sitz der Ruhe zu sein, und verwandelte sich, von Tag zu Tag mehr, in einen angstzuckenden Erdwurm - jämmerlicher als alle Übrigen. Nicht mehr zimmerlich war es da, auch nicht widerwillig oder bled lustlos (wofür der Erwachsene wenigstens einige Erklärungen gehabt hätte), sondern außer sich; im Elend. (KG 65)

At these moments, the 'innocence' of the child's transcendental identity - an identity formed before experience within specific social and historical conditions - conflicts and is overrun by society. The pattern of earlier works by Handke thus resurfaces here. It is society per se which disrupts the 'innocence' of the inner world. The analysis of Munchhausens Unglück, with its consideration of specific historical and social conditions, remains an exception. In Kindergeschichte there are a number of points where Handke declares himself free from the 'modern time' and places the child and himself beyond history:

Aber nach all den Jahren mit dem Kind durfte ihm niemand mehr sagen, was das Wirkliche sei. Hatte sich nicht, auch durch den unauflösbaren Zwiespalt zwischen der Arbeit und dem Kind, allmählich die Sicherheit eingestellt, endlich frei von dem Lügenleben der "modernen Zeit" zu zweit eine Art über den Zeit-
läuften stehendes Mittelalter fortzusetzen, welches es vielleicht nie tatsächlich so gegeben hatte, das

dem Mann (...) hinter allem Aktuellen als die wahre, seinetwegen auch wirkliche Zeit erschien?! (KG 86)

Hier verwünscht er jene Seins-Nichtse, die für ihren Lebenslauf die Geschichte brauchen; hier verwünscht er auch die Geschichte selber und schwört ihr für seine Person ab; hier erschaut er erstmals sich allein mit dem Kind in der Nacht des Jahrhunderts und in der leeren Grufthalle des Kontinents - und zugleich gibt das alles für später die Energie einer neuartigen Freiheit. (KG 94-5)

And it is in similar moments outside history but in communion with nature when the 'general law' is communicated from the child to the adult:

Halb in den Fluß versunken, die hölzerne Kabinenreihe einer aufgelassenen Badeanstalt. Jenseits des Wassers, gegen Westen, die dichtbebaute Hügelkette, wo auf mittlerer Höhe die unaufhörlichen Vorortzüge orange-weiß-violett dahinwischen. Der Sonnenuntergangshimmel ist silbrig, einzelne Blätter und auch ein ganzer Zweig sind weit ins Leere hinaufgewirbelt. Die Uferbüsche unten wehen jetzt in einer wunderbaren Übereinstimmung mit den kurzen Kinder-Haar im Vordergrund. Der Augenzeuge fleht einen Regen auf dieses Bild herab und bleibt zugleich nüchtern. Er weiß, daß in jenem mystischen Augenblick ein allgemeines Gesetz beschlossen ist, dessen Form er zum Vorschein bringen soll und das nur in seiner gemäßen Form verbindlich wird; und er weiß auch, daß, die Formenfolge eines solchen Augenblicks freizudenken, das schwierigste Menschenwerk überhaupt ist. (KG 33)

This moment is referred to again at the end of the book: 'Wie durften solche Augenblicke vergehen, oder vergessen werden: sie verlangten einen Zusatz, in dem sie weiter-schwingen könnten; eine Weise; den GESANG' (KG 136). The last work in the tetralogy, Über die Dörfer, attempts to put this 'general law', if not into a chant or canto, then at least into words: Nova's final speech proclaims the 'Geist des neuen Zeitalters' (96).

On one level, Handke's 'dramatic poem' is, as its title may suggest, a piece about ecology, about people having no 'connection' with their environment, about the encroachment of technology and civilisation upon nature,

and the resulting changes for the worse in the lives and hopes for the future of the inhabitants of the village, which Gregor, the main character, the 'Mann aus Übersee' (ÜD 11), returns to. Gregor is a writer, who has inherited the house and land of his parents in the village of his birth. His brother Hans lives with his family in the house; his sister Sophie works in a department store. Both want Gregor to forego the inheritance so that the property can be mortgaged and Sophie can open up her own shop. They suppose that Gregor can have few objections to this plan as he has spent most of his adult life away from the village, and was in any case estranged from both his parents and his brother and sister. But, in line with the overall title of the tetralogy, Gregor feels a need to 'return home':

Für eine lange Zwischenzeit galt mir der Ort wenig. Als du mir einmal erzähltest, jedesmal bei der Wiederkehr in deinen ersten Umkreis spürtest du schon von weitem geradezu eine "Seligkeit", da verstand ich das und beneidete dich. Von mir hätte ich dergleichen kaum sagen können. Aber seit dem Brief ist mir der alte Platz ganz gegenwärtig. Er ist der Hauptort meiner Träume geworden, der abschreckenden wie der vorbildhaften. (ÜD 18)

This confrontation with and coming to terms with the place of his childhood, familiar from Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, becomes the vehicle in the piece for the expression of a general pessimism about civilisation and technological progress as Gregor sees how the area and the lives and consciousness of the inhabitants have changed since he was last there. Allied to this is also then a reluctance to grant Hans' and Sophie's request. Gregor feels that Sophie's plans will turn her into a 'business woman', an artificial, inhuman existence:

Wie wirst du sein als Geschäftsfrau? Ich sehe dich schon in Maske und Kostüm. Ich höre das Klickklack deiner Schuhe (...). In deinen Augen wird ein falscher Glanz sein, in deiner Stimme eine falsche Melodie, in deinen Hüften eine falsche Eleganz, in deinen Beinen ein falscher Tanz - von Kopf bis Fuß die falsche Energie. (...) Dein besonders aufrechter Gang wird nicht der Tanz der Freiheit sein, sondern das Produkt eines Schnellkurses. (...) Deine Heimat wird das Handelsregister sein, und dein Name "Geschäftsinhaberin" wird schon bei Lebzeiten ein Grabsteinname sein. (...) Was treibt dich, die böse Legion all der Lebenden Toten zu verstärken und eine Unperson zu sein? (ÜD 56-8)

She answers this tirade with equal vehemence, accusing Gregor of not appreciating her need to become independent, of romanticising the position of the shop assistant who works for someone else: 'Woher deine Gewißheit, ich könnte ein Mensch sein nur in der Abhängigkeit? Ja, schon immer hast du die Leidenden, die Schicksalsergebenen im Licht der Verklärung als die eigentliche Menschheit gesehen' (ÜD 58). Sophie then leaves Gregor with a warning: 'Ich sage dir: ich werde dich nicht in Ruhe lassen. Du wirst der Helfer sein, oder du wirst nichts mehr sein' (ÜD 61).

Alone, Gregor gives vent to his general disgust for commerce and to his romantic view of nature:

O Felsen der Vorzeit. O Morgendämmerung mit den Regentropfen im Wegstaub, wo ich vorzeiten mit jemandem ging und dem Dasein am nächsten war. O Erde, die man einst das Reich des Lichtes genannt hat. (...) Und überall dazwischen das Geklapper, das Gerassel, das Gewimmel, das Gekurve, das Geklicke (...) das Geklarre der Geschäfte; (...) der böse Unfrieden der Geschäfte, der ewige Skandal der Geschäfte, das Verdamme der Geschäfte. Ich will zur Gerechtigkeit gehen! (ÜD 60-1)

A view of an idyllic nature sited before human intervention, such as Gregor gives voice to here, might lead one to expect the ecological level of the piece to involve a regression to a pre-industrial culture. But the problem is presented in the end as involving the preservation of

what is left. Gregor speaks of a dream he has had: 'Ich sah das von der Gefahr befreite Grundstück mit dem blauen Himmel darüber und dachte: Ich habe ein Stück Land gerettet. Ich habe ein Stück Himmel gerettet' (ÜD 61).

Certainly, Gregor is seen by the 'old woman' as a saviour. She too is highly critical of the progress the village has seen, and the way its natural infrastructure has been replaced by an order imposed on it from without, by the rich villa owners: 'Und wo ist das Dorf? Wo die Mitte war, ist jetzt ein Schild aufgestellt: "Dorfmitte". Auch die ehemaligen Feldwege sind inzwischen alle beschildert und heißen nach den reichen Zugezogenen, die dort ihre Landhäuser haben und die großen Steuern bezahlen' (ÜD 64). This has had an irreparable effect upon the consciousness of the village inhabitants, who, with the increase in material wealth, have developed mouths 'wie Sparbüchsen-schlitzte':

Ich möchte auch die Nachkommen verfluchen, die schon auf ihren Kinderbeinen dastehen wie Metzger und dreinglotzen mit den Augen von Gemetzgerten. Euch Kadavern fehlt nur noch das deutliche Kriechen! Nicht Menschen seid ihr, sondern deren Gegenteil: die Seinsvergessenen! Vielleicht gibt es keine Hölle, aber es gibt den Fluch! (ÜD 65-6)

This tradition of such an empty life, which is handed down from generation to generation, so that Hans' child becomes 'der kommende Verlierer, der für das Fortsetzungs-folgt sorgen wird' (ÜD 85-6), is something which Gregor was able to escape from by moving away: 'Ich wußte doch, daß ich vielleicht noch weit ärgere Dinge als damals der Bruder getrieben hätte, wäre ich dem vorgegebenen Lebenslauf nicht durch irgendein Glück entkommen' (ÜD 15). This idea of the 'pre-determined biography' within a rural setting

brings Handke's mother and Wunschloses Unglück immediately to mind. The impoverishment of the life of the village people and their total allegiance to material goods and advancement at the expense of their 'inner' development and happiness goes hand in hand with the destruction of their environment. Having escaped this process, Gregor appears as a source of hope to the woman, as a possibility of a certain kind of resistance:

Wann wirst du endlich für immer hier bleiben und dich ein bißchen um uns kümmern? Wann endlich trittst du auf gegen das tönende Unrecht der sogenannten Volksvertreter, der Regionalprogramme, der Fragebögen, der falschen Fürsorge, der Elektrozäune, des bösen Netzes aus Geflimmer und Gerede, über uns geworfen zum Abtöten, zum Seelenlichtausblasen, zum Ersticken? Rache! Du gehörst zu uns. Bleib hier und räche uns.
(ÜD 68-9)

But just as the woman has said that the only kind of resistance open to her is to curse the conditions - 'Vielleicht gibt es keine Hölle, aber es gibt den Fluch!' (ÜD 66) - so Gregor seems to place all his hope in the ability of thought and speech to resist the loss of 'connection' the people are suffering. Although documenting earlier in the piece the way that concrete has become the most common sight in the valleys around the village, he naively questions whether this must always remain so: 'Kann nicht der Beton zurück zu Urgestein gedacht werden?' (ÜD 24). The supposed power of thought, of the inner world, simply to assert itself free of reality is something we have encountered in previous works by Handke, most notably in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung and Die linkshändige Frau. The value of proclamation or assertion as forms of resistance to concrete conditions in the outer world is relativised when one considers the position of Handke's mother in a

similar situation to the inhabitants of the village. In Wunschloses Unglück Handke provided a framework for his mother's life, for her lack of wishes, future and happiness, which took into account the roles ascribed to her in the kind of society she lived in. The particular nature of this connection was seen then to be responsible for her feelings of lack of 'connection' within herself, that is, for her concrete feelings of alienation, isolation and loss of self. Mere proclamation or assertion is laughably powerless against these quite real social forces, which hinder and prevent the true fulfilment of people's lives, so that they feel they are merely playing out a role according to a pre-determined pattern. The particular situation of Handke's mother, which he so tellingly portrayed, haunts the final proclamation of the 'Spirit of the New Age' by the figure Nova at the end of the piece. In this speech the problems and questions Über die Dörfer has set are transcended in what one critic calls 'welt-verklärendes, waberndes Geschwafel'.²³

The speech stretches over eleven pages of the text and bases itself on the idea of speaking as resistance: 'Ja, es gibt die Gefahr: und nur dadurch kann ich reden, wie ich reden werde: im Widerstand' (ÜD 96). Its general theme is to re-instate hope in the minds of the listeners, that all is not lost. There is a plea for a rediscovery of nature, away from artificiality: 'Die Blume steht hochaufgerichtet als unser heimlicher König. Ja, die Verneigung vor der Blume ist möglich. Der Vogel im Gezweig ist ansprechbar, und sein Flug macht Sinn' (ÜD 97). Through this changed attitude to nature, the 'connection' is re-established in

the new harmony and 'emancipation' is achieved: 'Die Spitze des Baums ist die rechtmäßige Befreiungswaffe' (ÜD 98). This new attitude is linked again with the extra-social 'innocence' of the child: 'Übergeht die kindfernen Zweifler' (ÜD 98). A re-capturing of the world is seen purely in terms of a mental effort, of an assertion of inner world, and not in terms of political action:

Geht so lange, bis ihr die Einzelheiten unterscheidet, so lange, bis sich im Wirrwarr die Fluchtlinien zeigen; so langsam, daß euch wieder die Welt gehört, so langsam, daß klar wird, wie sie euch nicht gehört. Ja, bleibt für immer fern von der kraftlos-gewalttätigen, der als Macht auftretenden Macht. Die gute Kraft ist die des Übersehens. (ÜD 99)

The power and importance of children is re-emphasised - 'Merkt euch: sooft ihr starr angeblickt werdet vom entgegenkommenden Kind, seid ihr die Ursache' (ÜD 101) - and the call goes out to beget 'peace children', who will deter war through the power of speech: 'Zeugt das Friedenskind! Ja, zieht auf die Friedenskinder - rettet eure Helden! Sie sollen bestimmend sagen: Krieg, laß uns in Ruhe' (ÜD 102). Responsibility for the state of the world is re-invested in the 'people of today', but in a way which seems hopelessly naive when compared to the real power positions in the political world: 'Leute von jetzt: entdeckt, entgegengehend, einander als Götter - als Raumaushalter, Raumerhalter. Wollt es, werdet es, seid es - und führt euch nicht auf als die Hunde, bei deren Anblick sofort die Phantasie erstirbt' (ÜD 103-4). Against this, a sentence from Wunschloses Unglück springs to mind, which underlines the empty gestures of this entreaty: 'Sie war; sie wurde; sie wurde nichts' (WU 44). Any hope for the future in simply appealing to people to change their lives is, as

the life of Handke's mother exemplifies, misplaced hope.

The final part of Nova's speech proclaims all to be 'creators' of the world. Only then can the world truly begin anew:

Ruhig vom Entschluß, wird die Welt. Nur das Volk
der Schöpfer, jeder auf seinen Platz, kann werden
und sich freuen wie die Kinder. (...) Die Form ist
das Gesetz, und das Gesetz ist groß (...) Der Himmel
ist groß. Das Dorf ist groß. Der ewige Friede ist
möglich. (ÜD 105-6)

Nova's speech finishes and she crowns Hans' child, whilst the rest of the figures gather round and put on masks of leaves. The 'innocence' of the child as hope for the future and the praise of nature are combined, but with this action the piece finally sites itself outside any possible social context, the figures' masks being 'Zeichen ihrer Rückverwandlung in naturgeschichtliche Geschöpfe'.²⁴

This is also why, as in so many other works by Handke, such things can only ever be proclaimed. This is not an 'emancipation' or a 'healing' of a split or a re-establishment of 'connection', which can be shown in action, because ultimately it is not concerned with practical realisation, but only with highly individualistic, abstract assertion. The processes of socialisation, which Handke presented in earlier works, are transcended via a particularly abstract conception of the individual, which stands in direct contradiction to the life of Handke's mother.

Steven Lukes attempts to categorise the basic tenets of individualism in his book of the same name. Firstly, he sees 'the ultimate moral principle of the supreme and intrinsic value, or dignity, of the individual human being'.²⁵ Secondly, there is the notion of 'autonomy'.

or self-direction, according to which an individual's thought and action is his own, and not determined by agencies or causes outside his control'.²⁶ This sort of notion is important for Handke's work and occurs in many of the 'emancipatory' texts. Thirdly, there is the notion of 'privacy', of a private existence within a public world, an area within which the individual is or should be left alone by others and able to do and think whatever he chooses'.²⁷ It was the lack of this realm in his mother's life, which Handke so effectively portrayed in Wunschloses Unglück. Fourthly, there is the notion of self-development as an ideal for the lives of individuals. Lukes sees this ideal as being attainable in a variety of ways ranging from 'pure egoism to strong communitarianism':

It is either anti-social, with the individual set apart from and hostile to society (as among some of the early Romantics), or extra-social, when the individual pursues his own path, free from social pressures (as with Mill), or highly social, where the individual's self-development is achieved through community with others (as with Marx and Kropotkin).²⁸

The first two of these points clearly have relevance for Handke's characters as they strive to attain self-development out of their 'pre-determined biographies'. The solitude of isolation is pitched against the solidarity of community. Allied to this is a conception of society as a disruptive, unchanging force, which is basically antagonistic to human development, regardless of the particular constitution of that society. Not only this, but in some of Handke's works, notably Kaspar and Kinder-geschichte, there is the idea of the transcendental subject, whose identity pre-exists social and historical forces. The abstract individual, in whom socialisation processes,

with their constrictions and obligations, disrupt a more 'innocent' and 'natural' relationship with the world, and in whom desires, needs, interests, purposes and wants exist independently of the social context, has, according to Lukes, forerunners in Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke.²⁹ Lukes reports further that this conception of the individual was 'a principal target for a great number of nineteenth-century thinkers, many of whom held it to be a typically narrow and superficial dogma of the Enlightenment. Alternative, essentially social conceptions of the individual were advanced'.³⁰ Handke's own Wunschloses Unglück provides the most eloquent counter argument to his ahistorical, abstract conception of the individual and the relationship between it and society. The presentation of socialisation processes in that book shows how devastating 'final images of the world' can be when applied to a particular, individual life. Handke's 'emancipatory' texts do not take up the challenge set by that book, and, as such, they contribute nothing to the destruction of these 'final images' in the outer world, which was what Handke expected of literature in the early theoretical essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms'.

VI. HANDKE'S POSITION IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The themes we have seen emerging in Handke's writing are very much themes of the 'modern' period. The split between the self and the world, the consequent feelings of dislocation, disorientation and alienation of the individual, the fall back onto the self as the only source of anything approaching reliable information about the world, the sense of no 'connection', of no overall structure of coherence which is absolute or even generally valid, the mistrust of language both as a vehicle of experience and expression - in short, the feeling of having no securely defined place within the world, no 'home', no fixed relationship between inner and outer world, but rather a sense of chaos and fragmentation: these are themes and feelings which we can trace in the art of Modernism from the turn of the century onwards. They are also themes and feelings which have always involved a parallel concentration by artists on the problem of their artistic representation, a further element in Handke's writing as well, although one which has faded somewhat in recent years.

The Modernist era, which is generally dated between 1890 and 1930, represents for Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane 'the coming of a new era of high aesthetic self-consciousness and non-representationalism, in which art turns from realism and humanistic representation towards style, technique, and spatial form in pursuit of a deeper

penetration of life'.¹ This quest for a 'deeper penetration of life' arose from a crisis of culture, where the disintegration of traditional certainties and means of orientation within the world (scientific knowledge, spiritual and moral values, language) led to the attempt at the 'inauguration of a wholly new "civilizational phase"'.² The art which this era produced is, according to Bradbury and McFarlane, 'our art', and in their listing of its characteristics there is much which connects it with Handke's writing in its earlier, more iconoclastic manifestations, a connection which mirrors that between his early literary theory and the Russian Formalists:

It is the one art that responds to the scenario of our chaos.(...)It is the literature of technology. It is the art consequent on the dis-establishing of communal reality and conventional notions of causality, on the destruction of traditional notions of

the wholeness of individual character, on the linguistic chaos that ensues when public notions of language have become discredited and when all realities have become subjective fictions. 3

This new art was not however merely a reaction to a rapidly changing world where industrialisation and scientific advancement were ushering in a vastly complex reality⁴, it was also an attempt to break through the rigidities of convention and tradition associated with the old bourgeois society, it was an attempt to cause changes in perception. Hence it encompassed much more than simply a reflection of changes in the outer world, although it was this as well, but further it emphasised active disorientation and overturning of the status quo. Bradbury and

McFarlane list these more active characteristics as
'crucial notions':

The significance of de-creating the given surface of reality; intersecting historical time with time according with the movement and rhythm of the subjective mind; the pursuit of the luminous image, or else of fictional order sustained against consecutive story; the belief in perception as plural, life as multiple, reality as insubstantial. 5

This second, more active side to Modernist art, whereby traditional structures of coherence are positively subverted, gave rise to the emergence of the outsider as the visionary or source of true knowledge about the world. Untainted, as it were, by the prevailing ideology, he was clear-sighted and unfailingly honest:

The distinctiveness of select phenomena, the unique essence of individual personality, and the changing relationship between the individual and the 'whole' (...) constituted the new concern. The wanderer, the loner, the exile, the restless and rootless and homeless individual were no longer the rejects of a self-confident society but rather those who, because they stood outside, were uniquely placed in an age when subjectivity was truth to speak with vision and authority. 6

This situation is reproduced in many of Handke's books, if somewhat artificially. There, as we have seen, Bloch or Keuschnig or Marianne arrive at a reevaluation of reality and their position within it, usually as the result of being forced by the author to adopt an outsider's viewpoint, through the devices of an unmotivated murder, a dream, or an inexplicable 'illumination'.

If Handke reproduces to a certain extent the figure of the outsider, then he also reproduces another element of Modernist art as set out by McFarlane, the element of myth. McFarlane maintains that parallel with

the increasing disorientation and upsetting of traditional certainties occasioned by the outsider's point of view (the equivalent perhaps of Handke's 'fremder Blick'), there was the belief in the 'individual who necessarily commanded some unique perception of the things of life, who embodied some secret essence which alone gave the world its legitimization'.⁷ Within Modernist art this led to the use of myth as a 'highly effective device for imposing order of a symbolic, even poetic, kind on the chaos of quotidian event';⁷ within Handke, the search for a new order in the Langsame Heimkehr tetralogy involves the discovery of timeless 'laws' and 'secrets' of existence which are situated outside any historical framework: the need for them is however firmly rooted within an historical framework, as Wunschloses Unglück shows. Handke's inability to portray the fulfilment of that need within such an historical framework constitutes another link between his art and that of some authors associated with Modernism. Within specific terms we propose to look briefly at two Austrian authors - Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Robert Musil - whose writing anticipates many elements of Handke's.

The primary work of Hofmannsthal's which contains many of those elements and themes we are to find in the later Handke is Ein Brief. Written in August 1902 and published in the following October, the 'Chandos letter' charts the disruption and dissolution of the 'vereinfachende(r) Blick der Gewohnheit'⁹, which results from the inability of language to experience

and to express the world as a unified whole. The fictional figure of Lord Chandos can no longer write as he used to, but suffers rather from a 'geistige Starrnis', a petrification of the mind, which leaves him helpless and unable to penetrate 'ins Innere der Dinge'.¹⁰ He is thus thrown into the position of the outsider with no 'connection' with the world around him. This was not formerly the case, as some time before the whole of creation had appeared to him 'als eine große Einheit: geistige und körperliche Welt schien mir keinen Gegensatz zu bilden'.¹¹ The position of the individual within this harmony was assured: 'In allem fühlte ich Natur (...) und in aller Natur fühlte ich mich selber'.¹¹ The feelings of place and security within the world have now been shattered by the loss of 'connection' resulting from the crisis of language: 'Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen'.¹² The important word here is 'zusammenhängend'. Chandos can clearly still use language, otherwise he would never have been able to write the letter, but it is the orientation, order and security in the world, which language provided, which has now collapsed. This has an ambivalent value for Chandos however. On the one hand it has now led to his determination never to write another word again, on the other hand it has enabled him to see through and expose the artificial nature of this 'vereinfachende(r) Blick der Gewohnheit' referred to earlier. In vocabulary which is to appear with remarkable similarity in some

of Handke's writing, Hofmannsthal has Chandos report of those things which have now failed him. He writes of 'die abstrakten Worte, deren sich doch die Zunge naturgemäß bedienen muß' and 'die Urteile, die leichthin und mit schlafwandelnder Sicherheit abgegeben zu werden pflegen'.¹³ The fragmentation which Chandos experiences - 'Es zerfiel mir alles in Teile, die Teile wieder in Teile'¹⁴ - frees him however from the 'naturalness' and somnambulism of the 'habitual view', of the usual way of seeing, and makes him aware that such a view was only a construction of the mind. The 'awakening' which Chandos experiences reminds us of a similar situation in Der Ritt über den Bodensee, where the characters' 'awakening' out of their dream-like state brings its own problems of disorientation within a world and a language which is no longer perceived as a totality. Likewise, in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung, Keuschnig's determination to forget 'die schlafwandlerischen Sicherheiten für den Wachzustand' (SWE 35) leads him through a break-up of his affair and his marriage and through a period of deep despair about his own identity and place within the world.

In Ein Brief however Hofmannsthal does chart some positive elements arising out of this crisis. These are elements which are to reappear in his Briefe des Zurückgekehrten of 1907, and they are elements which, like Handke, involve the agency of mystical experience:

Schon beim sprachskeptischen Hofmannsthal (...) begegnet uns also nicht nur das bestürzende Erlebnis einer Sprache, die den vereinfachenden Blick der Gewohnheit enthält und daher den Zugang zur Wirklichkeit verstellt, sondern auch eine dem Skeptizismus unversöhnlich

entgegengesetzte positive, manchmal mystische
Sprachhaltung. 15

These positive elements begin with a new 'directness' towards everyday objects, a 'rare moment of intuitive harmony with all things',¹⁶ episodes similar to Keuschnig's experience of the 'Wunderdinge' in Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung. The episodes are described by Hofmannsthal in similar language to that used by Handke in his novel: they happen outside Chandos' control, 'suddenly', and fill him 'mit einer überschwellenden Flut höheren Lebens':

Eine Gießkanne, eine auf dem Felde verlassene Egge, ein Hund in der Sonne, ein ärmlicher Kirchhof, ein Krüppel, ein kleines Bauernhaus, alles dies kann das Gefäß meiner Offenbarung werden. Jeder dieser Gegenstände und die tausend anderen ähnlichen, über die sonst ein Auge mit selbstverständlicher Gleichgültigkeit hinweggleitet, kann für mich plötzlich in irgendeinem Moment, den herbeizuführen auf keine Weise in meiner Gewalt steht, ein erhabenes und rührendes Gepräge annehmen, das auszudrücken mir alle Worte zu arm scheinen. Ja, es kann auch die bestimmte Vorstellung eines abwesenden Gegenstandes sein, dem die unbegreifliche Auserwählung zuteil wird, mit jener sanft und jäh steigenden Flut göttlichen Gefühles bis an den Rand gefüllt zu werden. 17

The vocabulary of this section - 'das Gefäß meiner Offenbarung', 'die unbegreifliche Auserwählung', '(eine) Flut göttlichen Gefühles' - marks out the tenor of Chandos' experience: mystical and irrational. The establishment of this mystical 'directness' to objects in Ein Brief has been likened to an epiphany, that is, a moment of manifestation of some supernatural reality, by one critic.¹⁸ The restoration of a 'connection' between the self and the world by means of a 'magical moment' of congruence between the two, even though this

split was presented at times by Handke as being rooted within the prevailing social relations in Austria (Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, Wunschloses Unglück), is something we have observed in Handke's writing from the early poem 'Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt' onwards. Within Ein Brief this new 'directness' is accompanied by similarly mystical systems of thought and language. Chandos maintains that we could 'in ein neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein treten, wenn wir anfangen, mit dem Herzen zu denken'.¹⁹ This is a system of thought which is divorced from language, 'Denken in einem Material, das unmittelbarer, flüssiger, glühender ist als Worte',²⁰ and yet a system of thought for which there may be a language, which however emanates from the world and speaks, even though the objects of the world are 'dumb', to Chandos. This 'Sprache, in welcher die stummen Dinge zu mir sprechen',²¹ is 'direct knowledge of the world through emotion, without any mediation of words',²² and, as such, is of course beyond representation in words. The pattern in Ein Brief is thus very similar to that in Handke's writing: the sense of loss of 'connection' which, although estranged by Hofmannsthal through the device of the letter written by a fictional character some 300 years earlier, is anchored in a rapidly changing outer world, is overcome, transcended, through mystical experience of a new 'directness' within the inner world, and, what is more, this 'emancipation' can never be portrayed but only asserted.

We find a similar situation in Hofmann^Sthal's Briefe des Zurückgekehrten of 1907. The traveller returning via Germany to Austria feels a lack of unity, a lack of wholeness in the former country. He longs for the feeling of 'Zuhause',²³ but only feels unreality, as if objects were 'standing in' for the real objects, a perspective which Handke uses in Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter and Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied. Objects appear to Hofmann^Sthal's narrator as 'ghosts' of themselves, whereas in other countries they were 'etwas Selbstverständliches und zugleich Lebendiges'.²⁴ This loss of wholeness extends then to the narrator's inner world which is filled with 'tausend wirre gleichzeitige Gefühle und Halbgefühle',²⁵ and his lack of orientation is characterised by his feeling that the whole world around him is speaking an alien language: 'In den grossen Straßen herumzugehen war unmöglich; irgendwo hineingehen und Zeitung lesen war ebenso unmöglich; denn die redeten nur allzusehr dieselbe Sprache wie die Gesichter und die Häuser'.²⁶ He eventually finds relief from this situation through the mediation of art, the paintings of Van Gogh (cf. the importance of Cézanne's paintings in Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire). Art revives reality for the narrator by depicting objects in their wholeness and not just on the surface. Thus the narrator not only sees the objects but also 'das, was hinter dem Gemalten war, das Eigentliche, das unbeschreiblich Schicksalhafte'.²⁷ The paintings reveal the 'innermost life' of the objects, and these objects, both natural and man-made, appear 'wie neugeboren aus

dem furchtbaren Chaos des Nichtlebens, aus dem Abgrund der Wesenlosigkeit'.²⁸ This characteristic of Van Gogh's art is very similar to the faith Handke places in 'poetic thought' in the Büchner Prize speech and to the expectation he has of literature, as formulated in the early essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms', that is, a setting free of the world from its petrification within patterns of perception and representation. The painter's 'Starrkrampf der fürchterlichsten Zweifel' (cf. Chandos' 'geistige Starrnis' and Handke's juxtaposition of 'starren' and 'schauen' in, for example, Die linkshändige Frau) is overcome by the strength of his 'Vision' and the narrator is able to share in this experience as well, so that he feels once again both part of and party to a new wholeness within the world, a new harmony over and above its former dissolution:

(Ich) konnte fühlen, konnte wissen, konnte durchblicken, konnte genießen Abgründe und Gipfel, Außen und Innen, eins und alles im zehntausendsten Teil der Zeit als ich da die Worte hinschreibe, und war wie doppelt, war Herr über mein Leben zugleich, Herr über meine Kräfte, meinen Verstand. 29

The re-establishment of the lost 'connection' takes place then in the final letter. The notion of 'schauen' is reintroduced in the story of Rama Krishna's 'illumination' or 'awakening' whilst walking along a road. The sight of a line of white herons flying across the blue sky causes him to fall down on the road, and when he awakes and stands up again he is a changed man, a holy man. The narrator scorns those who would try to explain this in rational terms,

through scientific knowledge and theory, for scientific knowledge is too narrow and only causes the world to appear 'eine verschlossene Welt'³⁰ (cf. Handke's negative notion of a 'versiegelte Welt' in the Büchner Prize speech). Rather, this experience of Rama Krishna is a question of inner perspective:

Ein Schauen ist es, nichts weiter, und jetzt zum ersten Male trifft es mich, wie doppelsinnig wir das Wort brauchen: daß es mir etwas so Gewöhnliches bezeichnen muß wie Atmen und zugleich... So gehts mir mit der Sprache: ich kann mich nicht festketten an eine ihrer Wellen, daß es mich trüge, unter mir gehts dahin und läßt mich auf dem gleichen Fleck. 30

The pattern is repeated then: in the crucial moment of communication of this experience, language fails, is unable to express this mystical instance. The narrator resorts to an emotional experience of colours in the harbour of Buenos Aires to try to explain or convey something of the feeling of 'connection' arising from this notion of 'schauen':

Diese Farbe, die ein Grau war und ein fahles Braun und eine Finsternis und ein Schaum, in der ein Abgrund war und ein Dahinstürzen, ein Tod und ein Leben, ein Grausen und eine Wollust - warum wühlte sich hier vor meinen schauenden Augen, vor meiner entzückten Brust mein ganzes Leben mir entgegen, Vergangenheit, Zukunft, aufschäumend in unerschöpflicher Gegenwart, und warum war dieser ungeheure Augenblick, dies heilige Genießen meiner selbst und zugleich der Welt, die sich mir auftat, als wäre die Brust ihr aufgegangen, warum war dies Doppelte, dies Verschlungene, dies Außen und Innen, dies ineinanderschlagende Du an mein Schauen geknüpft? 31

The colours of nature and nature itself are presented by Hofmannsthal as being the source of a possible overcoming of man's alienation from himself, a possible source of a regaining of 'connection':

Warum sollte nicht die stumme werbende Natur, die nichts ist als gelebtes Leben und Leben das wieder gelebt sein will, ungeduldig der kalten Blicke, mit denen du sie triffst, dich zu seltenen Stunden in sich hineinziehen und dir zeigen, daß auch sie in ihren Tiefen die heiligen Grotten hat, in denen du mit dir selber eins sein kannst, der draußen sich selber entfremdet war? 32

For Handke, as we saw in our discussion of Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, nature cannot have this function any longer, or at least not as long as it is a place which is owned by someone and in which others have to work. Even in Langsame Heimkehr we saw that the landscape of Alaska functioned as a reflection of Sorger's inner state and not as a contrast to it or as the source of a possibility of change in itself. A withdrawal into nature is no longer a viable proposition, especially as that nature, as is convincingly portrayed in Über die Dörfer, has been almost completely taken over and partially destroyed by human beings: any withdrawal must be into the inner world and through the cultivation of the attitude of the child. Nevertheless, the parallels between the essays of Hofmannsthal discussed here and Handke's writing are clear. Both concern themselves with alienation and disharmony, both attempt to overcome this through transcendence of these problems via mystical experience located outside any historical framework.

The problems of language and experience and expression, and therefore the problems of the relationship between the self and its understanding of its own workings and of the world, are themes which

occur in the writing of another Austrian from the turn of the century onwards, Robert Musil.

Musil's Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß appeared in 1906. The book deals with the inner workings and struggle for consciousness and expression of that consciousness within an adolescent mind. It is, in the words of its motto by Maeterlinck at the beginning, an attempt, despite the unreliability and transience of the methods used, to grasp and thereby to externalise in language the 'Schatzgrube wunderbarer Schätze',³³ within the main character. But, also in line with the motto, it is an attempt which will ultimately fail: the treasures we had thought to 'bring to light' turn out to be merely 'falsche Steine und Glasscherben', whilst the true treasure still shimmers in the darkness. This image charts then the ultimate failure of language to express emotion, and this is itself a reflection for Törleß of the dualism within the world. Nothing is fixed or certain for him anymore, but reality (both the external world and his inner feelings) is shifting and uncertain, seemingly two-sided. Sensibility contrasts with feelings of earthy sexuality, the vulnerability and innocence of the young boys with the sado-masochism within the innermost recesses of the mind, represented by the attic lying within the innermost recesses of the building. The basic loneliness of the individual contrasts with their membership of a corporate body; the reliable, rational science of mathematics is suddenly upset by the notions of infinity, imaginary

numbers and the square root of minus one; the sense of 'two worlds' within one world: 'Es kam wie eine Tollheit über Törleß, Dinge, Vorgänge und Menschen als etwas Doppelsinniges zu empfinden.'³⁴

It becomes clear that Musil's novel is not just concerned with the portrait of the individual psychology of an adolescent. Musil was later to object to this one-sided interpretation of the novel and the expectations it raised in the reading public:

Abgesehen von dem Gewinn der Freundschaft einiger bedeutender Kritiker (...) schien dieser Erfolg aus einer Reihe von Missverständnissen zu bestehn. Man rühmte an mir die 'Psychologie' und den 'Realismus', und viele glaubten ein 'Erlebnis-', wenn nicht gar 'Bekenntnisbuch' vor sich zu haben (...) Länger haftete mir der Ruf des Psychologen an. Ich habe mich von Anfang an gegen ihn gewehrt. 35

The novel derives its themes rather from that same crisis of culture which informs Hofmannsthal's Ein Brief and Die Briefe des Zurückgekehrten. Within Musil's novel it leads to a breakdown in language, sense of self, and a setting free and acknowledgement of irrationality. Confidence in science and rational insight is shattered: such things are merely constructions, by means of which we try to orient ourselves within the world. In a passage which has remarkable affinities with themes in Der Ritt über den Bodensee, Beineberg explains to Törleß how we protect our rationality from knowledge of the true nature of the world (cf. Chandos' 'vereinfachender Blick der Gewohnheit') lest it should collapse totally:

Du selbst hattest damals jene kleine Sonderbarkeit in der Mathematik herausgefunden. Dieses Beispiel, daß unser Denken keinen gleichmäßig festen, sicheren Boden hat, sondern

über Löcher hinweggeht.- Es schließt die Augen, es hört für einen Moment auf zu sein und wird doch sicher auf die andere Seite hinübergetragen. Wir müßten eigentlich längst verzweifelt sein, denn unser Wissen ist auf allen Gebieten von solchen Abgründen durchzogen, nichts wie Bruchstücke, die in einem unergründlichen Ozean treiben. Wir verzweifelten aber nicht, wir fühlen uns dennoch so sicher wie auf festem Boden. Wenn wir dieses sichere, gewisse Gefühl nicht hätten, würden wir uns aus Verzweiflung über unseren armen Verstand töten. Dieses Gefühl begleitet uns beständig, es hält uns zusammen, es nimmt unseren Verstand in jedem zweiten Augenblick schützend in den Arm wie ein kleines Kind. 36

It is the collapse of this 'sure, certain feeling', the breakdown of orientation and 'connection', which causes Törleß' 'confusions'. The crisis of language in Musil's novel, as in Hofmannsthal's Ein Brief, is rooted in the specific nature of European reality at the turn of the century: with Handke however, as we saw in our discussion of Kaspar, it is rooted more in a suspicion of language itself, in a resistance to any system of mediation between the self and the world. Hofmannsthal attempted to overcome this by creating the lost 'connection' via what Noble called a 'mystische Sprachhaltung'³⁷: Musil registers Törleß' desire for a recapturing of this 'connection' - 'Er hatte das Bedürfnis, rastlos nach einer Brücke, einem Zusammenhange, einem Vergleich zu suchen - zwischen sich und dem, was wortlos vor seinem Geiste stand'³⁸ - but also has him realise that such a 'connection' is itself another fabrication: 'Aber sooft er sich bei einem Gedanken beruhigt hatte, war wieder dieser unverständliche Einspruch da: Du lügst.'³⁸ Whereas this 'connection' is, as we have seen, a possibility for

Handke (and Hofmannsthal) by means of transcendental experience - '"Der Zusammenhang ist möglich" (...) "Es existiert eine unmittelbare Verbindung; ich muß sie nur frei phantasieren"' (LH 112-3) - for Musil it is something which must remain incomprehensible and incapable of representation, even though he acknowledges that it is nevertheless there:

Und das, was vor der Leidenschaft dagewesen war, was von ihr nur überwuchert worden war, das Eigentliche, das Problem, saß fest. Diese wechselnde seelische Perspektive je nach Ferne und Nähe, die er erlebt hatte. Dieser unfäßbare Zusammenhang, der den Ereignissen und Dingen je nach unserem Standpunkte plötzliche Werte gibt, die einander ganz unvergleichlich und fremd sind...

Dies und alles andere, - er sah es merkwürdig klar und rein - und klein. 39

Thus Musil allows Törleß to re-enter society with this knowledge registered but under a certain amount of control: 'Törless also feels the power of the irrational and the unconscious, but learns that expression, even if incomplete, and some measure of involvement enable the individual to rise above nameless threatening forces and gain at least some control over his own existence.'⁴⁰ As with Handke, however, Musil is not able (or is not interested in?) depicting this re-integration. Hickman links the conclusion of Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß to Wittgenstein's famous phrase from the Tractatus logico-philosophicus: 'Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen'.⁴¹ Affinities between Handke and Wittgenstein are something we now turn to.

It must be firmly emphasised first of all however that in this case one can really only speak of

affinities, that is points of resemblance between Wittgenstein and Handke. To speak of anything more definite or traceable is to fly in the face of Handke's own pronouncements on the subject.⁴² Although possible sources for these affinities can mostly be located in Wittgenstein's Tractatus of 1918 (published 1921), Handke himself refers on at least two occasions directly to Wittgenstein's Philosophische Untersuchungen (part I finished in 1945, part II in 1949; both parts published in 1952), and what is more, on both occasions he refers to the same sentence. In the essay 'Die Literatur ist romantisch' Handke writes: 'Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist nicht der Wortsinn - zu diesem flüchten nur Philosophen, die sich ein eigenes System ausdeuten wollen -, sondern, wie Wittgenstein sagt, "sein Gebrauch in der Sprache".'⁴³ Some years later, in an interview with Christian Linder, Handke remarks:

Was ich gar nicht will: eine eigene Sprache erfinden, das finde ich idiotisch (...) Ich möchte mich vielmehr in der gegebenen Sprache ausdrücken, und das ist das, was ich immer noch von Wittgenstein gelernt habe, so wenig mich diese Philosophie interessiert: die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch. 44

Handke is referring in both these references to paragraph 43 of the first part of the Philosophische Untersuchungen:

Man kann für eine große Klasse von Fällen der Benützung des Wortes 'Bedeutung'--wenn auch nicht für alle Fälle seiner Benützung--dieses Wort so erklären: Die Bedeutung eines Wortes ist sein Gebrauch in der Sprache. 45

What Wittgenstein means here is that words as signs have no communicative value independent of their use.

This is determined by the context of their use (Wittgenstein develops the notion of various 'Sprachspiele' within which communication takes place according to the idea that 'das Sprechen der Sprache ein Teil ist einer Tätigkeit, oder einer Lebensform'⁴⁶). Therefore, for Wittgenstein, language can only have a communicative function within the public sphere, there is no such thing as a private language, and words themselves are value-free, are merely tools, until they are used. This is in contradiction however to Handke's early notion, which we discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, of language being 'crafty' or 'pernicious' per se: 'Anstatt so zu tun, als könnte man durch die Sprache schauen wie durch eine Fensterscheibe, sollte man die tückische Sprache selber durchschauen' (ZT 30). In spite of these quotations from the Philosophische Untersuchungen Handke's concept of language in this early period would seem to have more affinities with the Wittgenstein of the Tractatus, who was concerned with the 'Problem der Begrenzung des menschlichen Denkens durch die Sprache'.⁴⁷ Although he was later to write in the Philosophische Untersuchungen that 'die Sprache selbst (...) das Vehikel des Denkens (ist)',⁴⁸ it is in the Tractatus that the ideas of our mind being inhibited by 'die einschränkende Macht der Sprache', and that language has 'etwas Fixierendes und Einschränkendes an sich',⁴⁹ receive their fullest expression. Thus certain sentences from the Tractatus demonstrate this affinity, without of course showing

any more concrete link:

Die Gegenstände kann ich nur nennen. Zeichen vertreten sie. Ich kann nur von ihnen sprechen, sie aussprechen kann ich nicht. Ein Satz kann nur sagen, wie ein Ding ist, nicht was es ist.

Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt.

Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische.

Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muß man schweigen. 50

This list could be extended, but it would seem that these affinities, although perhaps most clear in Kaspar where the main figure's world is indeed limited and prescribed by the language he learns from the 'Einsager', result rather from a shared cultural climate, and here Handke's early connections within the 'Grazer Gruppe' are clearly crucial⁵¹, than from any close study. Certainly Handke does not appear to have concerned himself with Wittgenstein's philosophy by any means as closely as did his fellow Austrians the 'Wiener Gruppe' and Ingeborg Bachmann, or for that matter Helmut Heißenbüttel in West Germany.⁵² Handke's scepticism towards language remains a much less specific scepticism towards all systems of mediation as such between the self and the world.

During the Sixties, after he had moved from Graz to West Germany, Handke was very much the 'enfant terrible' of the literary establishment, especially after the premiere of Publikumsbeschimpfung. By the first few years of the Seventies it seemed, to judge from the critics, that everyone was beginning to write like Handke as the accent turned away from politics

towards investigation and nurturing of the inner self. A contextualisation of Handke within West German literature of the Seventies - the era of the 'Tendenzwende' - must be attempted however only with a certain amount of care. Although Handke seems on the surface to be a prime figure, if not the prime figure, within the category, it must be borne in mind that he has always maintained a distance to West Germany and its cultural life, particularly in the Seventies when he lived for the most part in Paris, before moving back to Austria at the end of the decade.

There have clearly been numerous critical attempts to come to terms with the Seventies and the literature it produced, and on many issues these essays are in agreement. Helmut Kreuzer, writing firstly in 1976, notes a new 'Rückbezug auf das eigene Ich', which means for him that the themes of the literature are now existential rather than political or social: he names 'das Gebären, das Kindsein, das Lieben, die Krankheit, der Selbstmord und der Tod'.⁵³ This involves then the incorporation into writing of autobiographical elements on a scale unknown in the Sixties. These can be quite obvious, as in Karin Struck's Klassenliebe or Verena Stefan's Häutungen (actually subtitled 'Autobiographische Aufzeichnungen'), or they can be integrated into a seemingly fictional text, as in Handke's Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung or Peter Schneider's Lenz. Kreuzer discusses both the Handke novel and the Schneider story, as indeed do most commentators when attempting to characterise the

Seventies, and sees many similarities between them:

Beide teilen die Motive der Vereinzelung, Langeweile, der Angst und der Schuld, der Bewegung ohne Ziel. Sie teilen sie mit Büchner und teilweise auch mit Kafka, mit literarischen Modellen, die sie dem Leser nicht verbergen. Weder Büchner noch Kafka können ihre Helden retten; Schneider und Handke weichen darin gemeinsam von ihnen ab und erlösen die ihren in ein sinnhaftes Leben und damit auch vom inneren Zwang zur permanenten Aggressivität (...) Es ist doch aufschlußreich, daß zwei repräsentative Bücher der 'neuen Subjektivität' sich zwar mit der heilbaren Depression einlassen, nicht aber mit unheilbarer Resignation und Kapitulation. 54

But of course the nature of this 'sinnhafte Leben' into which Keuschnig and Lenz enter is different: more will be said about this later. Kreuzer's early essay highlights however a problem with definitions of the literature of the Seventies. It is too easy to just band together all literature written about the problem of identity in the Seventies under the termini 'Neue Innerlichkeit' and 'Neue Subjektivität' and to present these terms as interchangeable: as we will see, some more accurate differentiation between them is called for.

Theo Buck feels able to offer steps towards this differentiation one year later. In his 1977 essay 'Die Rückkehr des Individuums in der Literatur des letzten Jahrzehnts' he begins by setting the scene and running through a number of by now familiar social factors determining the 'Tendenzwende', a term which is understood by all commentators in both a literary and political context. Thus he notes 'eine latente Verdrossenheit gegenüber Staat und Partei (...) das erschütterte Vertrauen in die wirtschaftliche

Stabilität (...) Orientierungslosigkeit (...) Bewußt-
 sein von der "Abschaffung des Einzelnen" in der
 materiellen Produktion (...) Zweifel an der
 wissenschaftlichen Rationalität, die generelle Skepsis
 hinsichtlich des Fortschritts der Menschheit (...) Anonymität und Isolation (...) aktionshemmender
 Utopieverlust'.⁵⁵ These characteristics of West Germany
 in the Seventies do not however, according to Buck,
 overwhelm the individual so much that he or she
 withdraws completely into the private world: there is
 'kein Rückzug ins Privatleben', rather the 'new
 subjectivity' is 'ein Suchen nach individuellen
 Lösungen aufgrund von Irritationen durch die Auss-
 enwelt'.⁵⁶ These 'irritations' are similar to the
 themes Kreuzer listed: 'Situationen der Trennung,
 gestörte Liebesbeziehungen, Selbstentfremdungsprozesse,
 Aufbrechen, Sich-Entfernen, ziellose Rückkehr,
 Krankheit und Tod'.⁵⁷ Buck sees this concentration on
 the self as betokening some form of resistance to the
 state of society in the Federal Republic at the time:
 he cites Schneider's Lenz in this regard, Jürgen
 Theobaldy and the poetry of Jürgen Becker. Buck then
 feels able to distinguish three groups within the 'new
 subjectivity': 'Erstens die neue Variante des
 Elfenbeinturms, zweitens eine Marcuse-Linie, drittens
 die Identifikation mit dem neuen Werther-Syndrom'.⁵⁸
 The authors he connects with these groups are Handke in
 the first case, Schneider and Struck in the second, and
 Botho Strauß and Rolf Dieter Brinkmann in the third.
 Handke is clearly significant enough to be included in

Buck's discussion, but the basis of his inclusion is largely the essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' of 1967 as well as his accusation of 'Beschreibungsimpotenz' at the meeting of the 'Gruppe 47' at Princeton in 1966. This immediately relativises however the validity of Buck's thesis for Handke: that the concentration on the self betokened some resistance to the state of society in the Federal Republic in the Seventies. There must be some more specific explanation of Handke's writing than this. How much is Handke a representative of the 'Tendenzwende' as understood by commentators? Where do the roots of his subjective writing really lie? There can be no doubt that Handke's writing shares many of the characteristics of such writing in the Federal Republic of the Seventies, and that for a brief moment in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied and Wunschloses Unglück he also provides an historical framework for his writing, similar in intention if not in actual detail (it is after all the framework of Austria) to the one which Buck himself provides. But can his writing be fitted so snugly into the narrow context of West German literature of the late Sixties and Seventies? Insofar as Handke (and his fellow Austrian Thomas Bernhard whose first publication was in 1957) can be grouped within the 'new subjectivity', is he not rather a 'special case', where the broader context of Austrian Modernist and experimental writing, such as that of Hofmannsthal and Musil as we have seen in this chapter or that of the 'Wiener Gruppe' and the principles behind the founding

of the magazine manuskripte in Graz as we saw in the first chapter of this thesis, must be brought into consideration as well, if not primarily?

This difficulty with a contextualisation of Handke begins to clash and lie uneasily with the urgent need to construct one in Hans-Gerhard Winter's essay 'Von der Dokumentarliteratur zur "neuen Subjektivität": Anmerkungen zur westdeutschen (sic) Literatur der siebziger Jahre' of 1981. Winter runs through the familiar themes of the 'new subjectivity' and discusses Schneider's Lenz, Handke's Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung and Brigitte Schwaiger's Wie kommt das Salz ins Meer?, incidentally another Austrian author. He then provides three groups of writers 'auf deren Werke der Begriff "neue Subjektivität" angewendet werden kann'.⁵⁹ The first group is the generation of the Student Movement: Schneider, Nicolas Born, Bernward Vesper. The second is composed of authors connected with the Women's Movement: Schwaiger, Struck, Stefan. The third group consists of one author, Peter Handke. Winter does not go any further into this group other than to recognise that Handke is clearly different from the other two groups and that he is also clearly too important to be left out: but a more precise determination of his writing is lacking.

The beginnings of a more differentiated and therefore more accurate analysis of Handke's position can be seen in Peter Beicken's essay '"Neue Subjektivität": Zur Prosa der siebziger Jahre' of 1980. In this essay Beicken 'isolates' 'verschiedene Aspekte

(...), die in der Literatur nicht in dieser Reinform auftreten, wohl aber doch als Bestimmungsfaktoren im komplexen Beobachtungsfeld nachzuweisen sind'.⁶⁰ The first is the 'Rückgriff auf die Subjektivität als Sensibilisierung der instrumentellen Vernunft': Beicken lists Martin Walser's later works Jenseits der Liebe, Ein fliehendes Pferd and Seelenarbeit. The second is the 'Prinzip der Selbsterfahrung auf der Basis autobiographischer Authentizität und fiktionaler Komposition': here Beicken lists Roland Lang's Die Mansarde and Claudia Storz' Jessica mit Konstruktionsfehlern. The third aspect is 'die rigorose Ausweitung der Gefühle in der Reflexion, der Nachweis der Empfindungen im Raum des Denkens', for which Botho Strauß stands. The final aspect is represented by Handke, 'der aus der intellektuellen Ichforschung eines Botho Strauß die konsequente Selbstdurchdringung des Subjektes macht mit dem Ziel der Konvergenz von Bewußtsein und Erleben in der poetisierten Empfindung'. This 'convergence', which Beicken alludes to here, is the state in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, 'in dem einem das Sehen schon ein Erkennen war' (KB 36); it is the longed-for directness of experience outside the constriction of any system of mediation between the self and the world, which we have seen running throughout Handke's writing, and as such it has links with Hofmannsthal's/Chandos' 'neues, ahnungsvolles Verhältnis zum ganzen Dasein'.⁶¹

This is clearly not the same kind of 'new subjectivity' we see in authors such as Schneider. In

Lenz the concentration on and awareness of the self achieved by the main figure during his stay in Italy leads to a new balance between the personal and the political. Lenz does not flee into the self but seeks to restore a deficit so that his political existence can continue, only now alongside and involved in his personal existence. This restoration of a deficit may take place within another country - and here there are links with the narrator in Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied, Keuschnig and Sorger, all of whom are in foreign lands - but Lenz does return to Germany, albeit with the help of the Italian police, and does intend to remain there, and his problems and their solutions are sited quite clearly within an historical framework (experience of West Berlin 'K-Gruppen', disappointment with the direction of the Student Movement, personal guilt about his mother's death, experience of Euro-Communism in Italy etc.): Lenz achieves what he does achieve as a result of living and experiencing as an historical being. Handke, as we have seen, has his protagonists 'restore the deficit' or 'connection' through mystical experience or the 'magical moment', elements completely lacking in Schneider. One could then place Handke not so much under the heading 'new subjectivity' as under that of the 'new irrationalism'. Stephan Reinhardt, in his essay '"Nach innen führt der geheimnisvolle Weg, aber er führt auch wieder heraus"' of 1979, notes that 'diese Skepsis gegenüber der Ratio und die Bereitschaft zum Irrationalen (...) in den letzten Jahren sprunghaft gewachsen (sind)'. The result

has been 'das Ende der neuen Aufklärung und die "Wende zum Mystischen"'. Any confidence, 'durch sinnvollen Gebrauch von Verstand und Vernunft die Weltverhältnisse (...) erklären zu können' has disappeared: now the aim is 'den etablierten Sinn aufzubrechen durch Wahnhaftes, durch das ganz Andere, Spontane, die abgelebten Muster durch eine neue Sehweise, und sei es die des Wahnsinns, in neuem Licht erscheinen zu lassen'.⁶² This direction is clearly much nearer to Handke's writing than many of the other formulations we have discussed. Within the framework of the 'Tendenzwende' it has become necessary for some critics to distinguish therefore between 'neue Subjektivität' and 'neue Innerlichkeit'.

As we have already noted in chapter IV of this thesis Roman Ritter makes this distinction in his early essay 'Die "Neue Innerlichkeit" - von innen und außen betrachtet' of 1976, in which he deals with Struck, Handke and Brinkmann. He specifies two groups of writers and plays them off against each other:

Die einen wollen Subjektivität einbringen in die literarische Aneignung der Realität, um ein Mehr an Wirklichkeit erfassen zu können. Für die anderen ist das Subjektive am Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit das entscheidende Kriterium ihres Realitäts- und Literaturverständnisses. Die einen nehmen das Subjekt - und damit auch sich selbst - ernst, weil sie den Einzelnen als gesellschaftliches Wesen begreifen; sie wollen den dialektischen Zusammenhang zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft nicht zerreißen, sondern konkretisieren und anschaulicher machen. (...) Die andere Gruppe sieht einen letztlich unversöhnlichen Gegensatz zwischen Individuum und Gesellschaft, der verabsolutiert wird. Die Entwicklung von Gesellschaft und Individuum wird enthistorisiert. 63

For Ritter, Handke clearly belongs to this second group, and our previous discussion of Die Stunde der

wahren Empfindung and Die linkshändige Frau bears this out. This petrification of the relationship between the individual and society, as opposed to one of dialectical interplay between the two as in Schneider's Lenz, leads Keith Bullivant and others to distinguish quite clearly between 'neue Innerlichkeit' and 'neue Subjektivität'. In his essay 'Subjektivität - Innerlichkeit - Abkehr vom Politischen?' of 1982, Bullivant firstly attacks the notion that the Seventies were an 'apolitical' decade, citing a number of examples of works of literature dealing with political themes - 'Berufsverbot', Terrorism, power of the press. He comes to the conclusion that 'eine nicht zu ignorierende Tendenz der siebziger Jahre (...) die Fortsetzung einer politischen Literatur (ist)'.⁶⁴ Within the literature of the 'Tendenzwende' Bullivant distinguishes then between 'neue Innerlichkeit' and 'neue Subjektivität'. The former is characterised by an 'Abkehr von oder Absage an Politik' and a withdrawal into 'wesentlich als autonom präsentierte Innenräume'.⁶⁵ This is the position of Handke, Bernhard and others, in Handke's case the continuation of a much broader Austrian tradition of mystical transcendence of a reality perceived as unchanging and hostile to the individual. The latter term, 'neue Subjektivität' - examples are Uwe Timm, Franz Xaver Kroetz, Wolfgang Koeppen, Peter Schneider, Karin Struck - is 'die Aufarbeitung von durch Kollision des Selbst mit der Umwelt produzierten Erlebnisstoffen, "die Darstellung des Einzelschicksals im Wechselspiel mit der

politischen, sozialen und historischen Umwelt".⁶⁶
 Without this underlying political, social and historical context Handke must raise the 'emancipatory' action of his work onto the mystical plane.

Whereas for Ritter the examples of his first group of writers 'verbinden (...) mit ihrer literarischen Produktion gesellschaftliche und politische Intentionen',⁶⁷ the notion of politics and writing has, as we saw in the first chapter of this thesis, always been problematic for Handke. Indeed, even the notion of politics outside the framework of literary production has its problems for him and was one of the motivations behind the juxtaposition of a 'politischer Mensch' and a 'poetischer Mensch' in the Büchner Prize speech, Handke eventually declaring his allegiance to the latter and to the power of 'poetic thought'. If one follows Handke's political statements and essays from the earliest days, one registers a confusion of Marxism and Anarchism gradually becoming less and less clear. In the essay 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms' of 1967 Handke justifies his lack of political engagement with purely practical arguments: 'Ein engagierter Autor kann ich nicht sein, weil ich keine politische Alternative weiß zu dem, was ist, hier und woanders, (höchstens eine anarchistische). Ich weiß nicht, was sein soll.' (BE 26) Within the framework of the resistance to the 'final images of the world' in that essay, this anarchist perspective is clearly consistent. It is developed, if in a somewhat 'tongue in cheek' manner, in the acceptance speech for the

Gerhart-Hauptmann Prize of 1967, in which Handke refers to the recent acquittal of the policeman Kurras, who was alleged to have shot Benno Ohnesorg during the demonstrations against the Shah of Iran on 2nd June 1967. Handke ironically acclaims this acquittal, as he says that it shows that proof of guilt can never be absolute. He therefore demands that courts in future return only acquittals in all cases, for 'keinen Angeklagten der Welt kann man mit wirklicher Sicherheit schuldig sprechen'. This in turn would render the courts, prisons and all institutions of the law obsolete: 'Ich fordere (...), daß überhaupt alle dem einzelnen übergeordneten Institutionen des Staates abgeschafft werden!'.⁶⁸

A year later, there is a much more clearly defined commitment to Marxism. This sharpening of political outlook in the wake of the shooting of Ohnesorg is a phenomenon which has been noticed by a number of commentators involved in the Student Movement.⁶⁹ It is a sharpening however which is blunted for Handke by the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. As a result of this there is still a commitment to the political philosophy of Marxism - Handke calls 'das ökonomische Modell des Marxismus (...) das einzige noch mögliche Modell einer halbwegs annehmblichen Ordnung'.⁷⁰ - but a rejection of Marxism 'as it is practised': 'Der Marxismus als offizielle Institution hat sich nach diesem Ereignis verächtlich gemacht (...) Im Staate praktiziert, produziert er aus dessen Bürgern bloße Produktionsidioten.'⁷¹ This disappointment manifests

itself in the short essay 'Horváth und Brecht' of 1968. Here Handke criticises Brecht for offering an 'einfaches Denkmodell wie das marxistische (...)' Deswegen ist Brecht so einfach, vereinfacht: er zeigt zwar die Widersprüche, aber er zeigt auch die einfache Lösung dafür. Diese Lösung ist aber für mich nichts als ein Bonmot oder ein Aphorismus'.⁷² Handke prefers a dramatist such as Horváth with his 'Unordnung und unstilisierte Sentimentalität (...) Ich mag diese IRREN Sätze bei ihm, die die Sprünge und Widersprüche des Bewußtseins zeigen'.⁷³

1968 would seem to mark then disappointment and a return to a more anarchist outlook after the brief involvement in Marxism, a political philosophy which, for Handke, soon revealed itself to be rigid and constricting. By 1973 this had developed into an antipathy towards any kind of organised political thought or expression. The essay 'Was soll ich dazu sagen?' chronicles the difficulties of having any individual, personal political opinion within a media-saturated society: 'Ich wollte etwas zu Vietnam sagen, das von mir war, und konnte es nicht. (...) Es ist (...) eine allgemeine Schwierigkeit von uns Zeitungslesern und Fernsehⁿzuschauern'.⁷⁴ The same problem of language manifests itself in the Büchner Prize speech 'Die Geborgenheit unter der Schädeldecke', so that the only hope for the future appears to lie not in politics, in action and change in the public sphere, but in 'poetic thought': 'Ich bin überzeugt von der begriffsauflösenden und damit zukunftsächtigen Kraft

des poetischen Denkens.'⁷⁵ The anarchist perspective is reaffirmed in the same speech: 'Was mich unfähig zu einer politischen Existenz macht, ist nicht der Ekel vor der Gewalt, sondern der Ekel vor der Macht (...)' Als gestalt- und leblos empfinde ich bis heute fast alle, die mächtig sind.'⁷⁶ Unfortunately this feeling about them does nothing to change or reduce their power or influence over the course of other people's lives.

'Das ist es, was mich seit diesen Jahren beschäftigt: Wie kann man das Glück darstellen? Wie kann man vor allem das Glück dauerhafter zu machen versuchen.'⁷⁷ This 'happiness' is clearly not the opposite of the 'Unglück' Handke's mother experienced, which was rooted in the social conditions and expectations of women in rural Austria. Rather, this 'happiness' is a mental act, an inner acceptance of 'senselessness', a re-establishment of 'connection' on a plane above that of social reality and alienation. It is a state which Handke never tires of asserting in different ways. This has led more and more to a decrease in any kind of formal experimentation in Handke's work, so that by the time Über die Dörfer appears, dramatic action is subsumed to this assertion of the 'Spirit of the New Age'. This is undoubtedly connected not so much with a less negative view of socialisation forces - these have in any case by now been reified and presented as unchanging and unchangeable, part of existence per se - as with a total faith in the ability of the individual to divorce him- or herself from society and to gain 'emancipation'

from within. This contrast between a materialist and an idealist view of the individual is reflected in the 'Rede zur Verleihung des Franz-Kafka-Preises' of 1979. Many critics have noted connections between Handke and Kafka and we ourselves briefly discussed Die Stunde der wahren Empfindung in relation to Die Verwandlung in chapter IV of this thesis.⁷⁸ The importance of this speech however is that Handke details how his writing must differ from that of Kafka. This is because, whereas the world ('die Welt') is shown by Kafka as 'eine bösertige Übermacht, die mit dem sogenannten Lebenslauf jedes einzelnen Katz und Maus spielt', for Handke creation ('die Schöpfung') appears as 'eine Herausforderung (...), die ich vielleicht, vielleicht sogar auf (meine) Dauer, bestehen kann'.⁷⁹ Through observation of nature, of this 'creation', Handke hopes to give form to 'Schönheit' through his writing, even at the risk of appearing ridiculous:

Und freilich komme ich Schreibender, in meinem Pflichtbewußtsein, den willigen Lesern, dem 'Volk der Leser' (das auch ich so sehr will), von der verborgenen, immer wieder sich verbergenden, der menschenmöglichen, der guten Welt zu erzählen, mir manchmal als eine tragikomische oder auch bloß lächerliche Figur vor - aber die flüchtigen Augenblicke eines ja als Gesetz erfahrenen ANDEREN Lebens zu einem sanft nachdrücklichen Seins-Entwurf ineinanderzuphantasieren, das allein ist es, was mir inzwischen als nothelferische, als die notwendige, Literatur vorschwebt. 80

If this now marks the direction of Handke's writing, then the final sentence of Wunschloses Unglück - 'Später werde ich über das alles Genaueres schreiben' (WU 105) - will never be realised. This blind faith in the power of the 'inner world', regardless of the fact

that in his mother's case, for example, this 'inner world' was completely dominated and defined by the demands of the 'outer world', is inadequate in the face of the hegemony of ideologically produced 'final images'. Far from providing further accuracy about the relationship between the individual and society, Handke's writing now tends to confuse that relationship. In the interview with Arnold, Handke pleads for the kind of literature he writes to be accepted as 'Korrektur, als ein Modell von Möglichkeit, Leben darzustellen'.⁸¹ This may hold as long as 'life' is perceived as some existential category: as soon as one thinks however of individual lives, within their respective social and historical contexts, - such as the life portrayed in Wunschloses Unglück - then Handke's writing since then is seen to provide only distortion and mystification.

Notes

Introduction

- 1 Heinrich Vormweg, Die Wörter und die Welt, Neuwied and Berlin 1968, p.60.
- 2 Discussion of some of these texts will be incorporated into the relevant later chapters.
- 3 Peter Handke, Die Innenwelt der Außenwelt der Innenwelt, Frankfurt 1974, sixth impression, p.5. (Henceforth referred to in the text with the abbreviation IAI).
- 4 Der Schriftsteller und sein Verhältnis zur Sprache - dargestellt am Problem der Tempuswahl, edited by Peter André Bloch, Bern 1971, p.177.
- 5 'Peter Handke', in Peter Handke, edited by H. L. Arnold, Text+Kritik, vol. 24, Munich 1969, p.17.
- 6 *ibid.*, p.18.

1. HANDKE AND LITERARY TRADITION

- 1 'Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms', in Peter Handke, Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, Frankfurt 1972, p.20. (Henceforth referred to in the text with the abbreviation BE).
- 2 'Die Literatur ist romantisch', *ibid.*, p.38.
- 3 Christa Merkes, Wahrnehmungsstrukturen in Werken des Neuen Realismus, Frankfurt/Bern 1982, pp.30-1. Dieter Wellershoff, Die Wahrheit der Literatur. Sieben Gespräche, Munich 1980, p.26. Helmut Heißenbüttel, Über Literatur, Munich 1972, second impression, p.112.
- 4 Alain Robbe-Grillet, Towards a New Novel, London 1965, p.137.
- 5 'Zur Tagung der Gruppe 47 in USA', in Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, *op. cit.*, p.29. (Henceforth referred to in the text with the abbreviation ZT).
- 6 Manfred Durzak, Peter Handke und die deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur, Stuttgart 1982, p.9.
- 7 Tony Bennett, Formalism and Marxism, London 1979, pp.4-5.
- 8 *ibid.*, p.20.
- 9 *ibid.*, p.31.

Notes to Chapter I (contd.)

- 10 *ibid.*, p.54.
- 11 *ibid.*, pp.53-4.
- 12 *ibid.*, p.54.
- 13 *ibid.*, pp.31-2.
- 14 'Die Geborgenheit unter der Schädeldecke', in Peter Handke, Als das Wünschen noch geholfen hat, Frankfurt 1980, sixth impression, pp.71-80.
- 15 'Österreich und die Schriftsteller', in Literatur im Residenz Verlag. Almanach auf das Jahr 1974, Salzburg 1974, p.60.
- 16 Handke, 'Geborgenheit...', *op. cit.*, p.80.
- 17 *ibid.*, p.76.
- 18 Bennett, *op. cit.*, p.34.
- 19 'Das Neue in der Literatur der fünfziger Jahre - ein Überblick', in Vom 'Kahlschlag' zu 'movens'. Über das langsame Auftauchen experimenteller Schreibweisen in der westdeutschen Literatur der fünfziger Jahre, edited by Jörg Drews, Munich 1980, p.15.
- 20 *ibid.*, p.17.
- 21 Renate Beyer, 'Innovation oder traditioneller Rekurs? Beobachtungen zum wirkungspoetischen Aspekt der Konkreten Poesie', in Konkrete Poesie II, edited by H. L. Arnold, Munich 1975, second impression, p.23.
- 22 *ibid.*, p.25.
- 23 Walter Höllerer, 'Unser Gestern verfällt dem Aberglauben. Und unser Heute?', in Vom 'Kahlschlag' zu 'movens', *op. cit.*, p.24.
- 24 'Ausbruch aus der Provinz', in Wie die Grazer auszogen, die Literatur zu erobern, edited by Peter Laemmle and Jörg Drews, Munich 1979, p.21.
- 25 *ibid.*, p.26.
- 26 'Meine fünfziger Jahre', in Vom 'Kahlschlag' zu 'movens', *op. cit.*, p.48.
- 27 Die Wiener Gruppe, edited by Gerhard Rühm, Reinbek 1969, second impression, pp.22-3.
- 28 *ibid.*, p.182.
- 29 *ibid.*, p.65.

Notes to Chapter I (contd.)

- 30 *ibid.*, p.419.
- 31 Peter Handke, Stücke I, Frankfurt 1975, third impression pp.22-3.
- 32 Rühm, *op. cit.*, p.416.
- 33 Robbe-Grillet, *op. cit.*, p.47.
- 34 *ibid.*, p.136.
- 35 *ibid.*, pp.53-4.
- 36 *ibid.*, p.56.
- 37 *ibid.*, p.141.
- 38 *ibid.*, p.91.
- 39 *ibid.*, p.145.
- 40 *ibid.*, p.152.
- 41 Merkes, *op. cit.*, p.32.
- 42 *ibid.*, p.241.
- 43 *ibid.*, p.246.
- 44 *ibid.*, p.241.
- 45 *ibid.*, pp.249-50.
- 46 Dieter Wellershoff, Literatur und Veränderung, Munich 1971, p.65.
- 47 *ibid.*, p.67.
- 48 *ibid.*, pp.71-2.
- 49 *ibid.*, p.72.
- 50 *ibid.*, pp.64-5.
- 51 *ibid.*, p.68.
- 52 R. Hägele and R. Voris, Peter Handke, Munich 1978, p.36
- 53 Peter Handke, Begrüßung des Aufsichtsrats, Munich 1977, fifth impression, p.87. (Henceforth referred to in the text with the abbreviation SR).
- 54 Günter Heintz, Peter Handke, Munich 1974, pp.15-18.

Notes to Chapter I (contd.)

- 55 see Silvio Gaggi, 'Brecht, Pirandello, and the Two Traditions of Self-Critical Art', Theatre Quarterly, 8 (1979), no.32, pp.42-46.
- 56 Ich bin ein Bewohner des Elfenbeinturms, op. cit., pp.88-125.
- 57 ibid., p.88.
- 58 ibid., p.92.
- 59 ibid., p.101.
- 60 ibid., p.91.
- 61 ibid., p.99.
- 62 Stücke I, op. cit., p.201.
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1. Primary Works by Handke used for this thesis
2. Secondary sources in book form
3. Secondary sources in journals and newspapers (articles, reviews)
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Section 1 is listed alphabetically by title; sections 2, 3, and 4 alphabetically by author.

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